30 DAYS TO

Increase Your Protein

NEW!

Your **day-by-day** guide to future-proofing your body

Issue 3 | £8.99

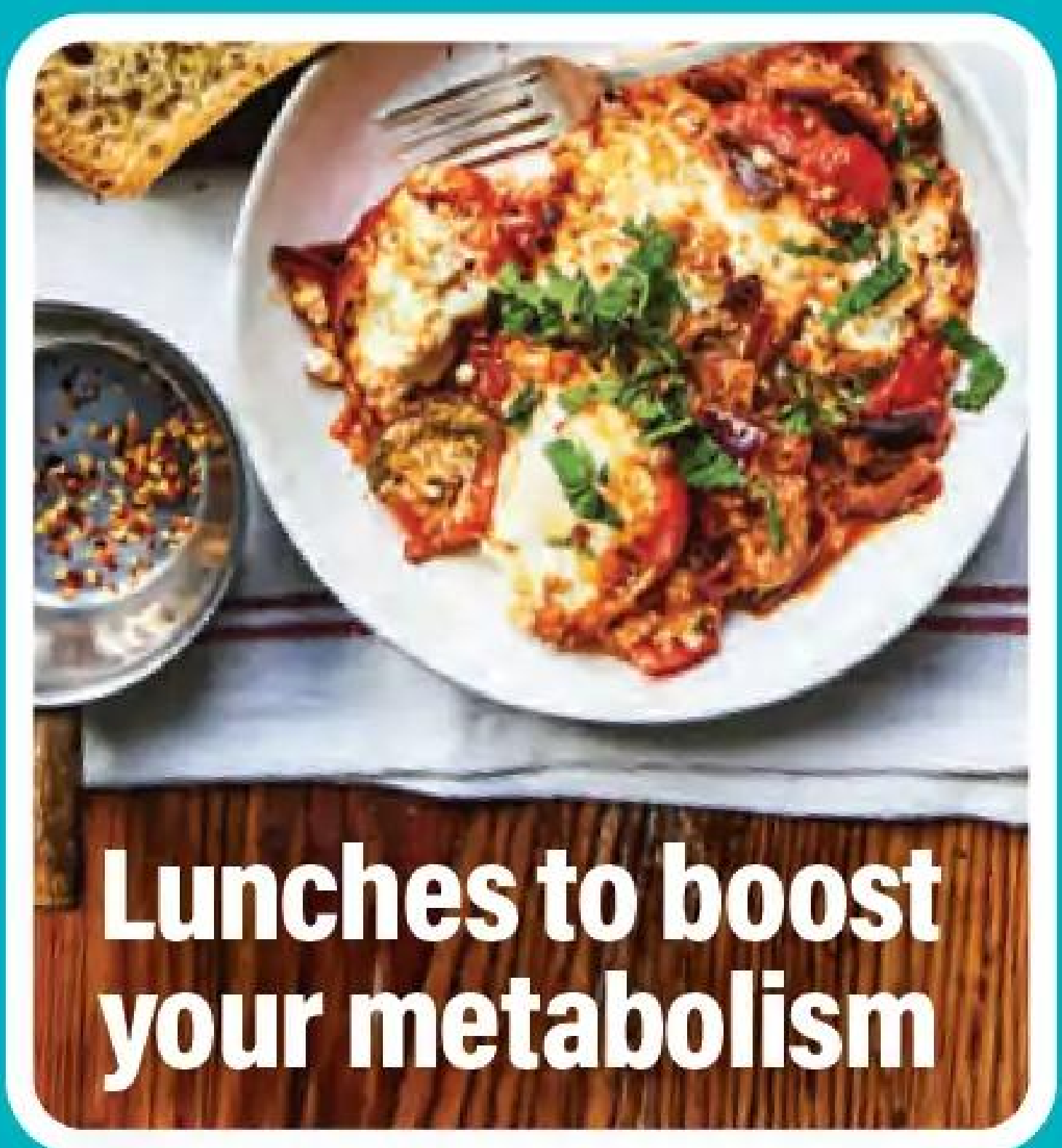
WHY YOU NEED MORE PROTEIN

+30 easy ways to get it

How to feel...
✓ More energetic
✓ Stronger
✓ Full for longer
...at any age

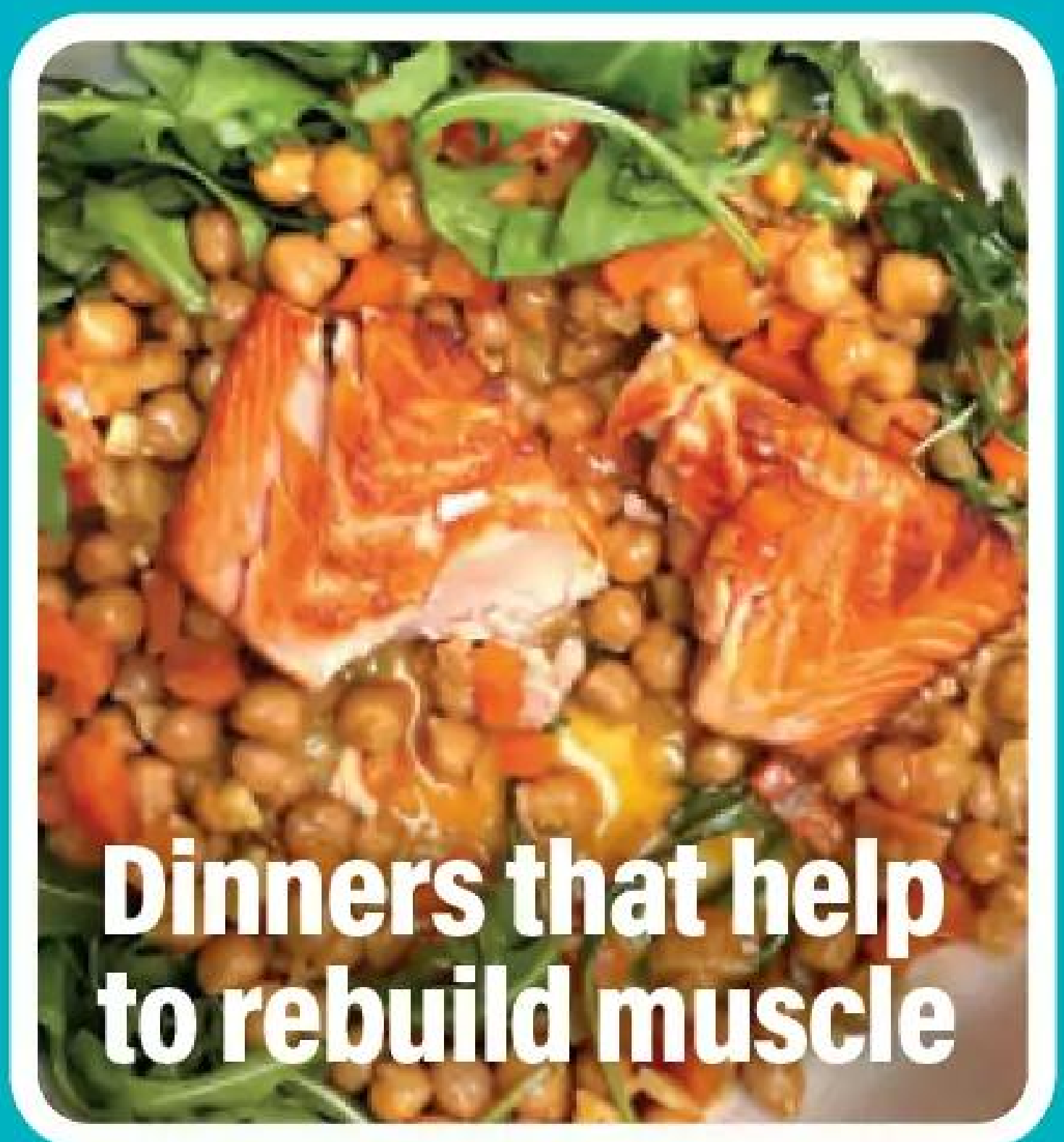
Including 30 recipes with 20g+ protein for every meal

Protein-packed breakfast ideas



Lunches to boost your metabolism

Budget-friendly meal planning



Dinners that help to rebuild muscle

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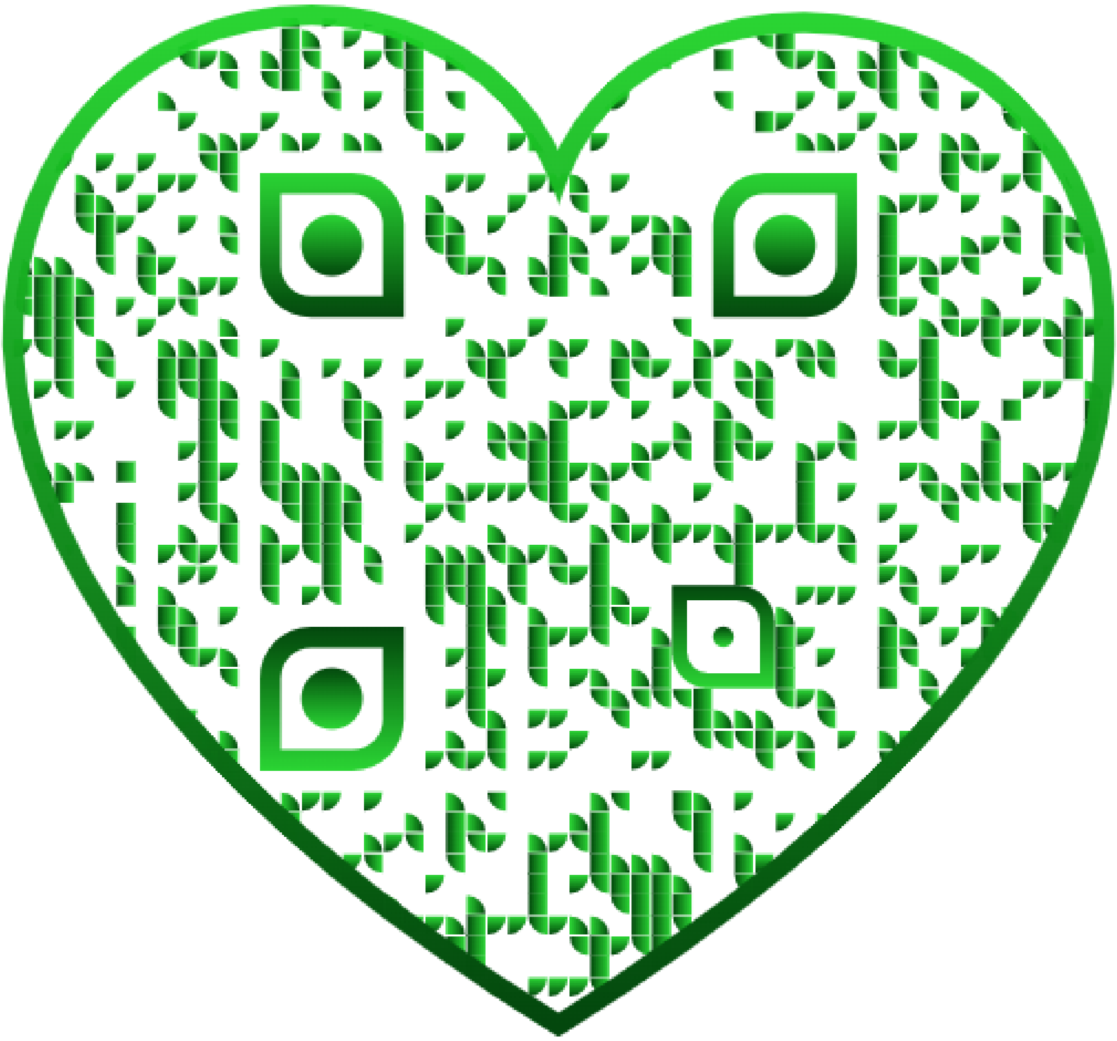
30 Days to...
Issue 3
GBP £8.99



Welcome

Protein has been getting a lot more focus over the last 18 months or so, particularly when it comes to supermarkets bringing out own-brand protein ranges. If you're reading this magazine, this subject has obviously peaked your interest, and you want to learn about why you should be consuming more protein, and how to do that in a sustainable way.

Well, you've definitely come to the right place. Over the course of this magazine, you'll learn all there is to know about protein and pick up 30 simple new habits for increasing the amount in your diet. We hope that by the end of the month you'll have more energy, your muscles will be repairing quicker, and you'll be snacking less between meals. Yes, protein can help achieve all of those things! It's time to reveal the secrets...

Sally, Holly & Sarah
The *30 Days To* team

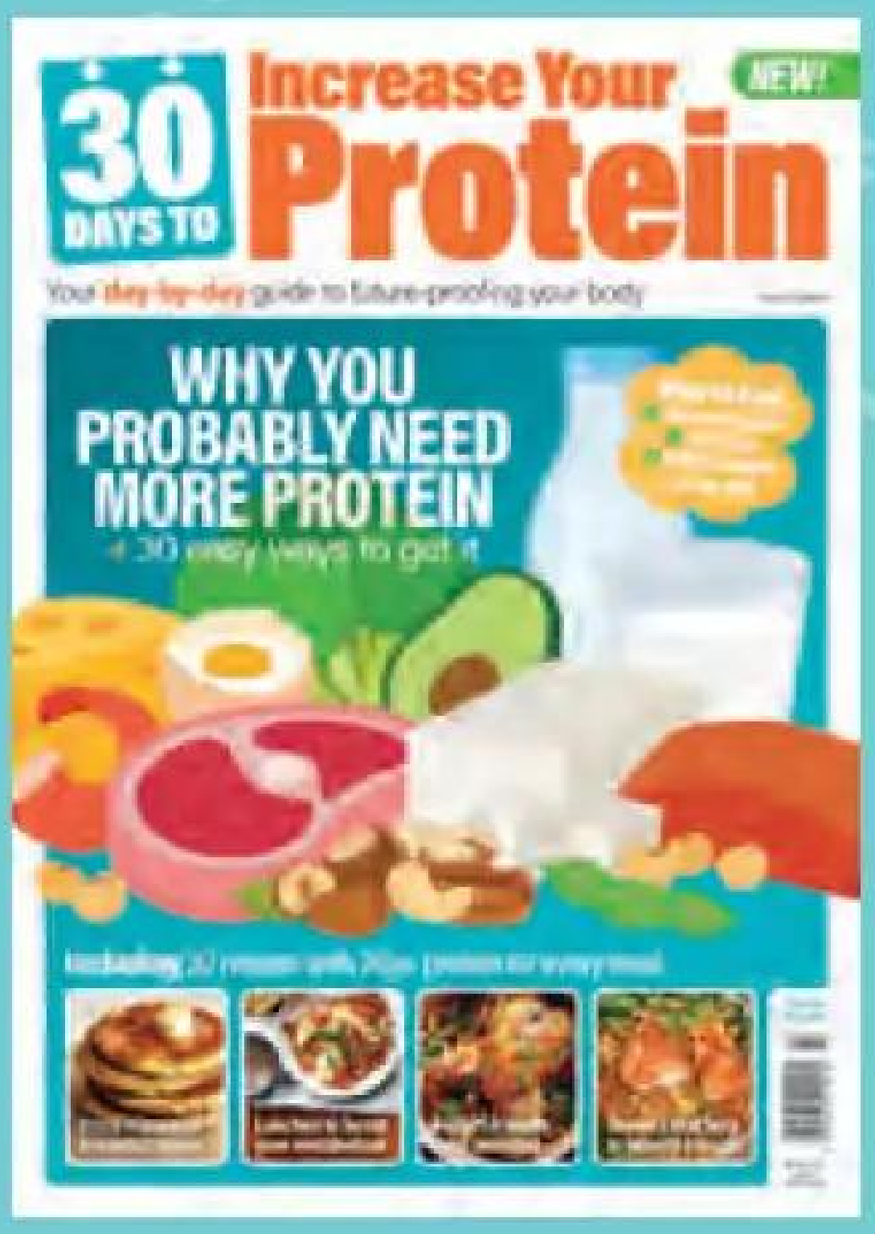
30 DAYS TO Increase Your Protein

What you can expect from 30 Days To...

1 **Build healthy habits one day at a time.** Rome wasn't built in a day, and you can't expect your habits to change that quickly either. Making one small change every day makes it all feel much more achievable and less overwhelming.

2 **Make it stick.** Experts say it takes 30 days to build a habit and for your brain to start considering it to be part of your routine. So don't expect everything to come naturally straight away, give yourself time. By the end of the month you'll get there.

3 **Personalise the plan.** We're not expecting you to adopt all 30 habits for the rest of your life. Take stock every week and see which ones sit best with you and are helping. Keep those up, and leave behind the ones that don't work for you.


30 DAYS TO Increase Your Protein
NEW!
WHY YOU PROBABLY NEED MORE PROTEIN
+30 easy ways to get it

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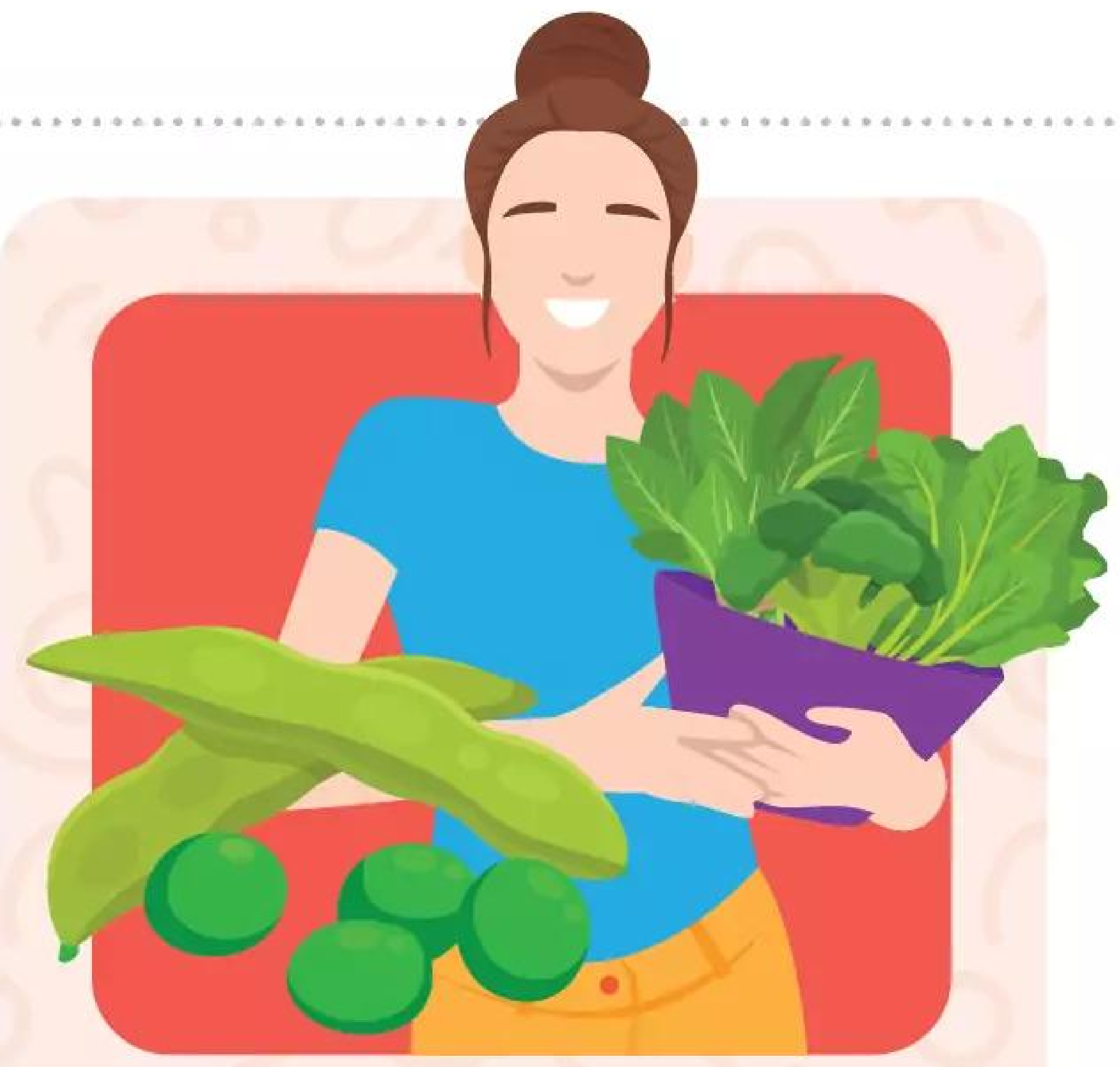

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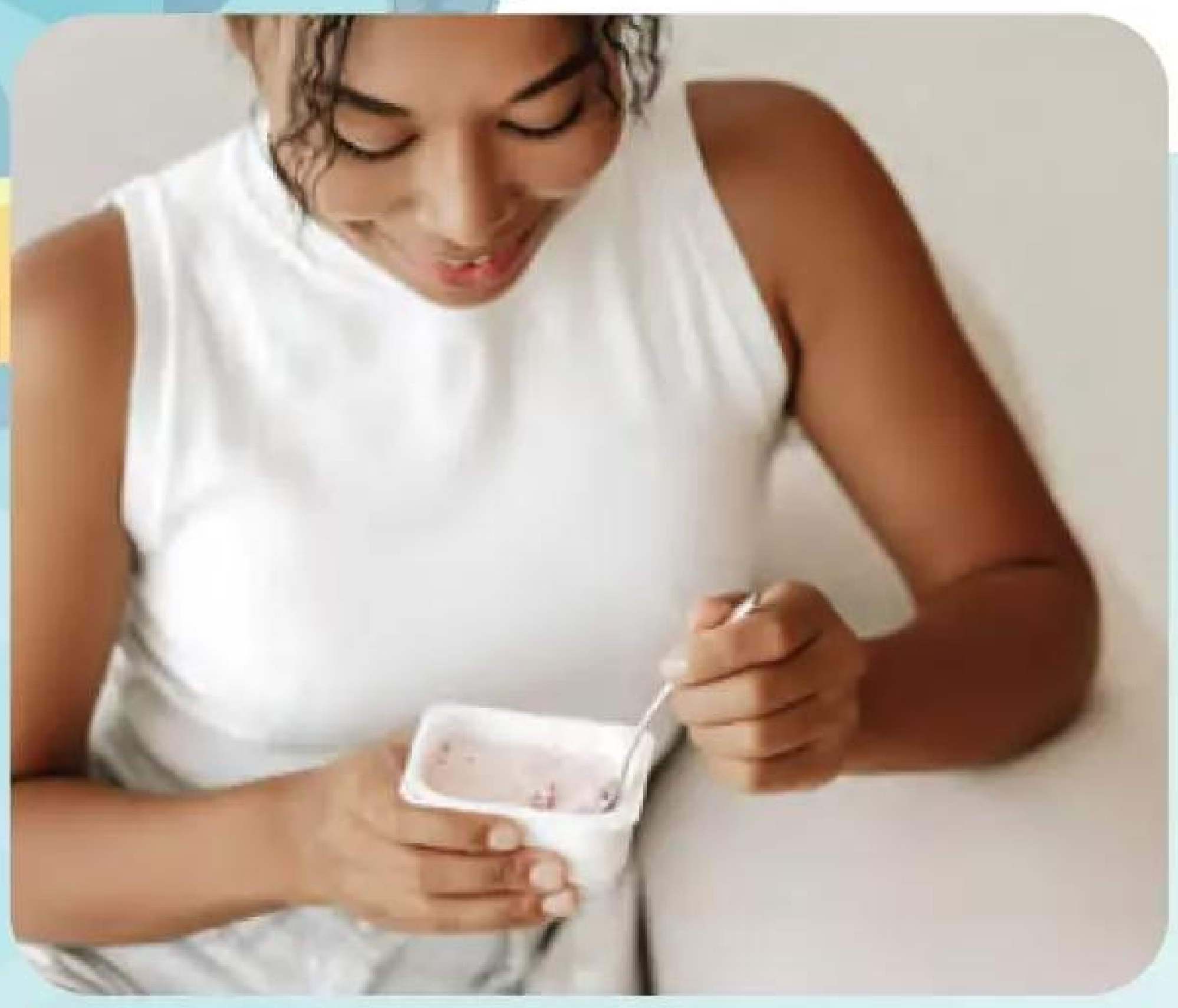

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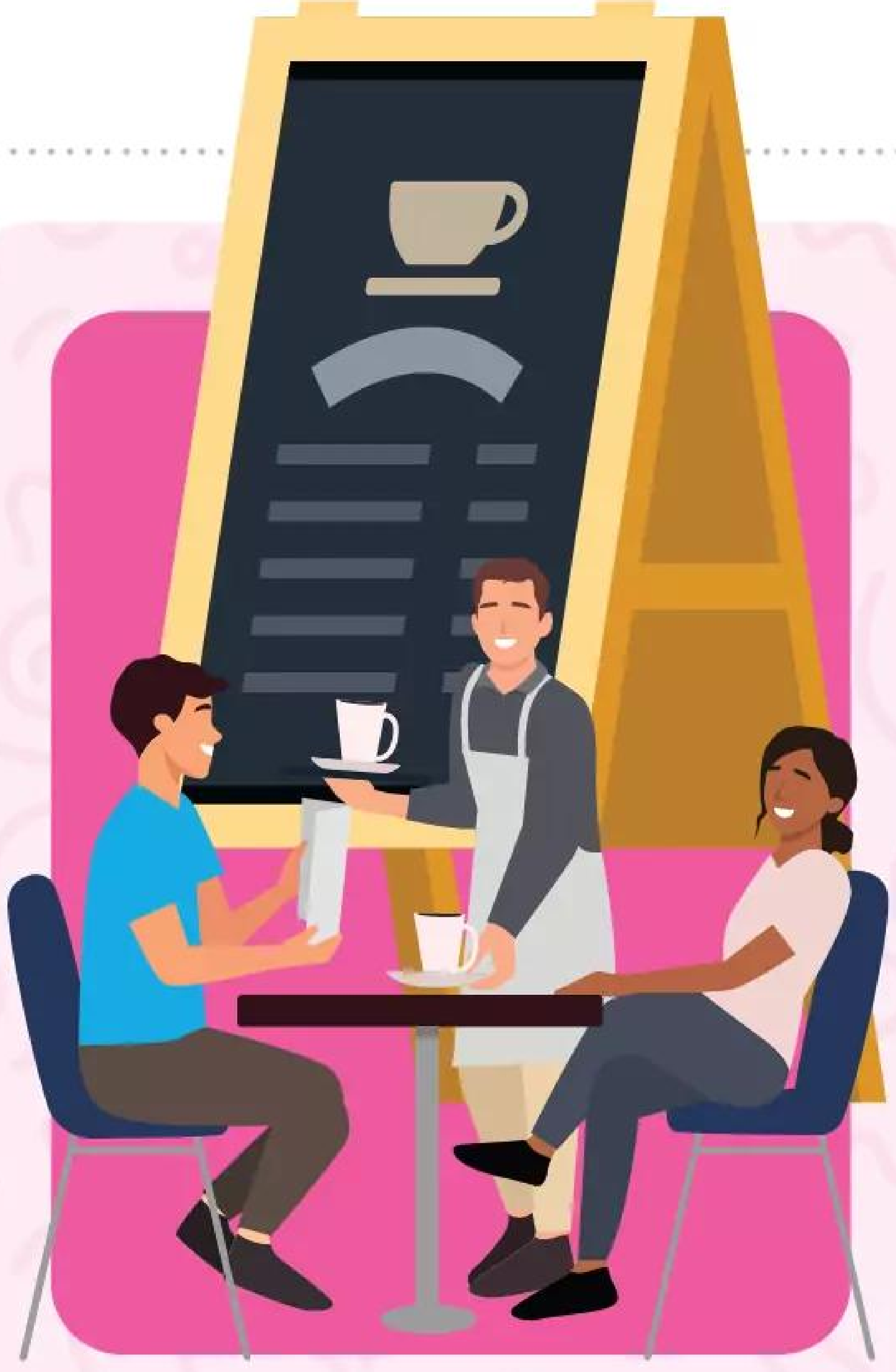

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Why do we need protein?

Words: Zoe Miller

What actually is protein and why is it so important for our bodies? We go back to basics

Protein is a nutrient that's essential for the body to function normally. Made from molecules known as amino acids, protein is found in a variety of different foods, but that doesn't mean all protein sources are created equal.

Although meat is the first thing that comes to mind when many people think of protein, there are plenty of other great protein sources – some of which come with added fibre and extra health benefits.

Before we explore the different ways to get protein in your diet, let us find out what protein is and why it is so important for keeping your body healthy.

What is protein?

Protein is a molecule that's found in all living things. Although many of us think of protein as something found in food, protein refers to all the different structures created from nature's building blocks: amino acids.

Different amino acids are combined to make proteins, but there are 20 that are most commonly used in animals and plants. By changing the order and combination of these amino acids, a wide variety of proteins can be made.

Proteins are responsible for everything from providing structure to making hormones to speeding up chemical reactions. It's not just humans that use proteins for these

Whole food protein vs protein powders

You might be considering supplementing your diet with protein powders, bars or shakes, but it's important to compare the pros and cons of taking supplements with eating more high-protein foods throughout the day.

Whole food protein

- ✓ Essential for overall health
- ✓ Contains a variety of nutrients
- ✓ Eaten as a meal or snack and absorbed more slowly
- ✓ Protein in its natural form

Protein powder

- ✓ May benefit people trying to gain muscle or avoid losing it
- ⊕ Lacks other nutrients, including fat
- ✓ Convenient and quickly absorbed
- ⊕ Very high amino acid content, but added preservatives, colours, and sugar

purposes – other animals and even plants need proteins to survive.

For us to produce the proteins our bodies need, we have to include plenty of protein-rich foods in our diet.

How does the body use protein?

Although we need to eat protein to support the body's normal functions, we can't use the protein we eat as it is. First, we need to break it down into the amino acids it's made up of. Only then can the amino acids be used to build all the proteins we need for functions such as:

- building and maintaining muscle
- supporting the immune system
- making hair and skin
- speeding up the body's chemicals reactions
- producing hormones
- transporting nutrients around the body

Once broken down, amino acids can also be used as an energy source to power the body.

Although all amino acids are important, nine are known as 'essential', as the body cannot make them itself. This means we need to get all our essential amino acids from our diet, which is where complete proteins come in.

Telling the difference between complete and incomplete proteins

Although we need them for our body to function as it should, we are unable to synthesise the nine essential amino acids ourselves. These amino acids are valine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine phenylalanine, threonine and tryptophan.

Complete protein contains all nine of these amino acids, meaning you can get all your essential amino acids in one place. Protein that comes from animals is complete – this includes things like meat, eggs, dairy and fish. Some plant proteins, like Quorn, soya and quinoa, are also complete.

Incomplete proteins are lacking at least one of the nine essential amino acids. Although most plant protein sources are incomplete, they are each missing different amino acids. By combining different plant-based proteins, you can still get all the essential acids you need.

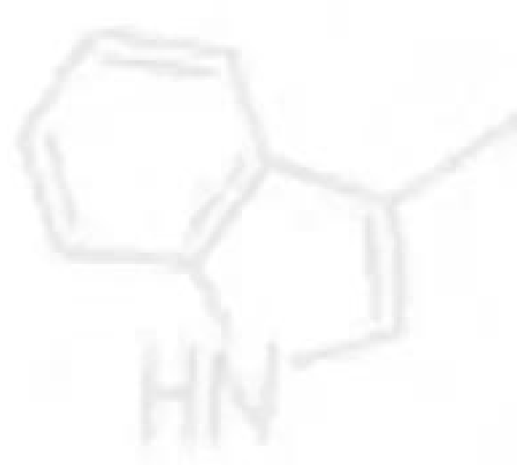
Where can you get your protein from?

Protein is found in a variety of foods, including meat, fish, dairy, eggs, and some plant-based foods.

Although meat is a complete protein that contains all nine of the essential amino acids, it is often higher in fat than other protein sources. A high-meat diet is also linked to an increased risk in heart disease, diabetes, and even some types of cancer.

The NHS recommends limiting yourself to a maximum of 70g of red meat a day and opting for leaner cuts of meat, which can help you cut down your fat intake while still meeting your protein requirements.

Fish tends to be a lower-fat source



PROTEIN'S ROLE IN THE BODY

Metabolism

The protein you eat is broken down into amino acids to fuel the cells in your body, alongside fats and sugars.

Not only this, but amino acids are also used to build the proteins that support your cells' metabolic reactions. Types of proteins known as enzymes are responsible for speeding up the chemical reactions that are powering your body and keeping you alive. They also help to get rid of the waste products that are produced.

Muscle growth

Eating enough protein is key for both muscle growth and for muscle maintenance. Your muscles are constantly being built up, broken down, and repaired. To do this effectively, you need to be getting enough amino acids in the form of protein.

If you are not eating enough protein, then your body may start to break down your own muscle protein in order to get the amino acids that it is lacking and not replacing it.

Immune function

Your immune system helps protect you from a variety of diseases and infections. Protein's building blocks, amino acids, are necessary for many different parts of the immune system to function properly.

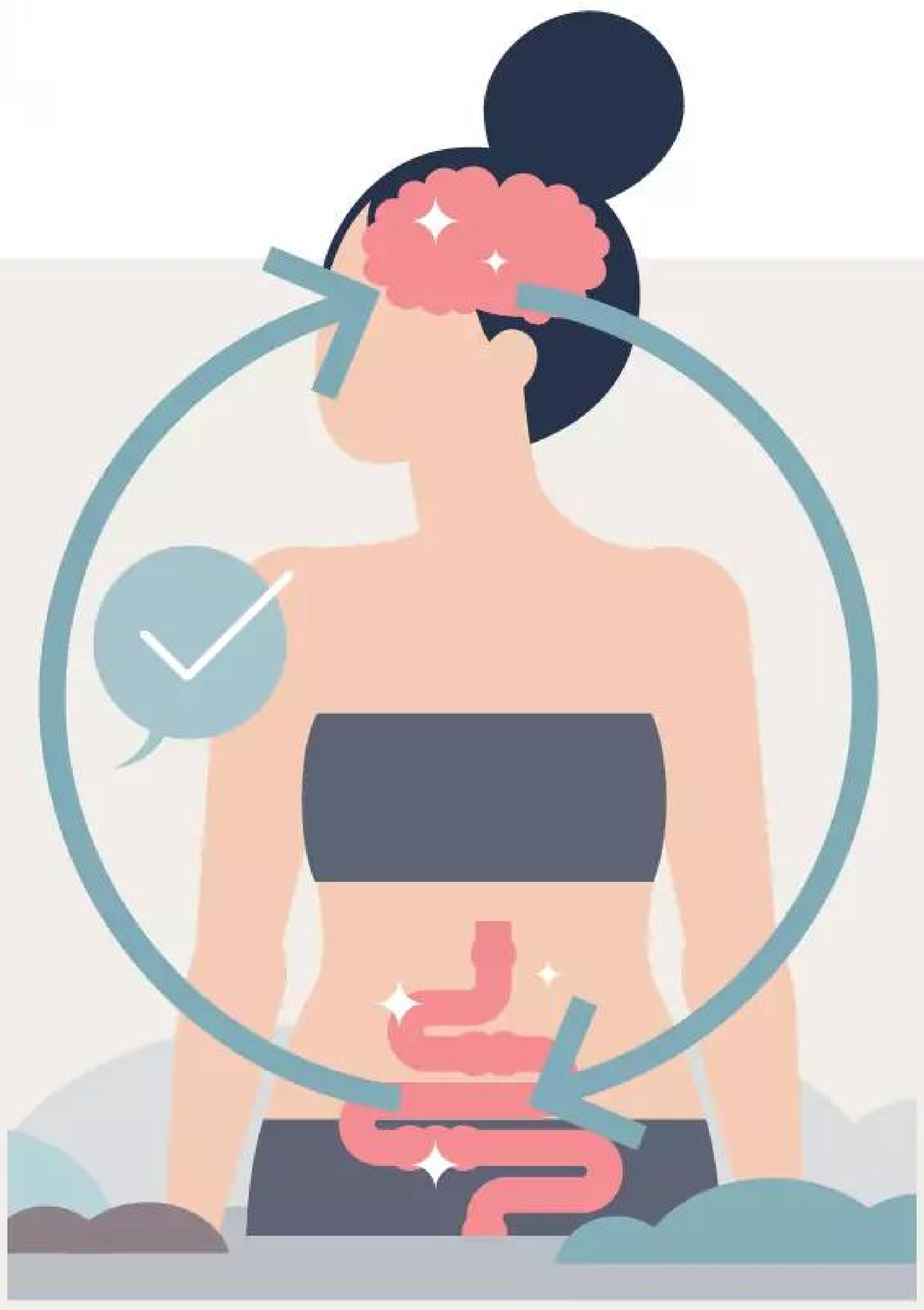
Amino acids are needed to make immune cells, to create the chemicals for cells to communicate with each other, and for the body to produce antibodies. Without enough protein in your diet, your immune system cannot protect you efficiently.

of complete protein than meat, and it's good to eat at least two portions of fish a week.

Peas, beans and lentils are all great plant-based protein sources that are also high in fibre, which can help you to feel fuller for longer. Combine beans and pulses with wholegrains and/or animal protein to make sure you're getting enough of all nine essential amino acids.

Although tofu, soya and Quorn are complete proteins and can make up part of a healthy diet, not all meat alternatives are as healthy as they seem. Make sure to check out the packaging to see how much salt and fat these products contain.

When thinking about how much protein to eat, it's good to aim for two portions a day. As a rough guide, one portion of protein is about enough to fill the palm of your hand. How much each person needs varies depending on a few factors, including their age, gender and activity levels. If you're more active, you may need to increase your protein intake.



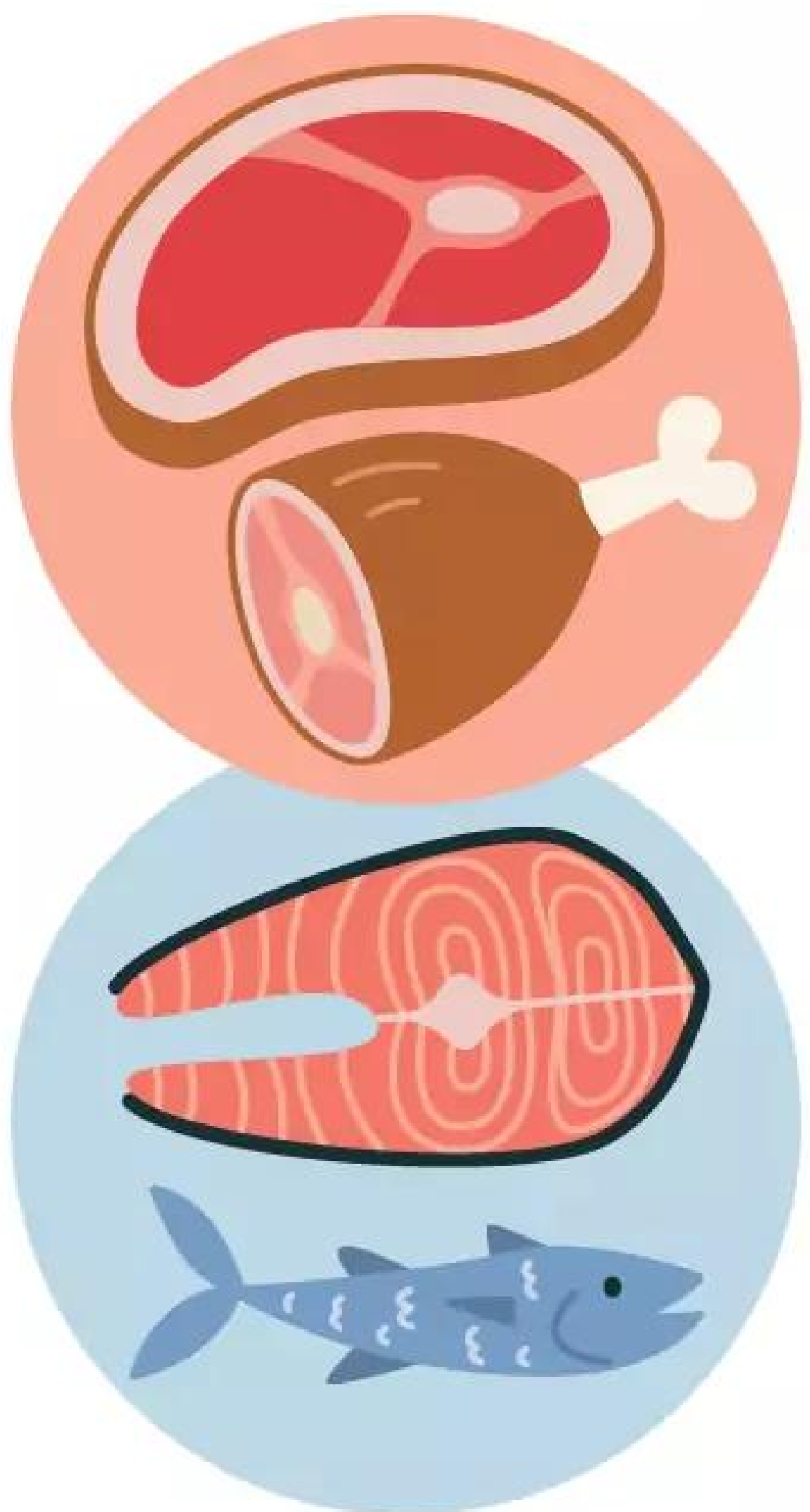
Staying full

A diet that's rich in protein can help you to stay fuller for longer.

As both animal and plant proteins have complicated structures, it takes a while for the digestive enzymes in the gut to break them down. Protein also decreases the release of hunger hormones and stimulates the release of fullness hormones.

Protein's satiating properties make it helpful for avoiding overeating and weight gain.

PROTEIN AND different diets



Omnivore protein sources

As an omnivore, a huge variety of protein sources are available to you. Although it's great to have so many complete proteins to choose from, eating too much red or processed meat can lead to health problems.

It's a good idea to cut down on your red meat if you are eating more than 90g a day – aim for 70g a day or less instead. Try swapping it out for lean meats, fish, eggs, or dairy-based protein sources instead.

You don't need to exclude meat, but there are some clear health benefits to cutting down and having one meat-free meal a week where you have fish or a vegetarian protein-source. If a meat-free meal seems unachievable, swap out half the mince in your Bolognese with lentils or substitute some of the lamb in your stew with butter beans.

Vegetarian protein sources

Dairy products (like Greek yoghurt or cottage cheese), eggs, wholegrains (like quinoa or wholewheat pasta), nuts, seeds and legumes are all amazing vegetarian protein sources.

Although eggs and dairy products tend to have all of the nine essential amino acids, it's a good idea to eat a variety of plant-based protein sources as well as they have tonnes of added health benefits.

Some mock meat products contain quite a lot of protein, but they're often ultra-processed and loaded with fat and salt. It's OK to eat them occasionally, but it's best to get the majority of your protein from unprocessed plant proteins, dairy and eggs.

Vegan protein sources

As most vegan protein sources are incomplete and lacking at least one of the essential amino acids, you'll need to eat a combination of different plant proteins such as legumes, nuts and wholegrains to get everything you need.

Tofu, quinoa and vegan Quorn are all complete proteins, and can be good to include in your diet. Just make sure to check how much salt and sugar is added to marinated or flavoured tofu and meat alternatives – they're not always as healthy as they seem.

PROTEINS
FATS
CARBS

How much protein do you need?

Words: Zoe Miller

Now we know why our bodies need protein, it's time to find out how much. Here's how to do your own calculations...

Protein is an important nutrient. It helps with building and maintaining muscle, provides energy, and keeps your cells working as they should be. Eating plenty of protein also helps keep you full and may even help to avoid weight gain. The question is, how do you know if you're getting enough?

According to the British Nutrition Foundation, an adult needs 0.75g of protein per kg of bodyweight a day. This translates to a recommended daily allowance (RDA) of about 56g a day for a 75kg man and 45g a day for a 60kg woman.

Although it's helpful to have a figure to aim for, this RDA doesn't take into account many of the factors that change how much protein your body needs.

What influences how much protein you need?

The RDA of protein is based on the minimum amount of protein an average person needs to avoid losing lean body mass (your bodyweight minus your body fat). Some experts prefer to use the acceptable macronutrient distribution range (AMDR) to calculate protein needs instead. As the AMDR recommends 10-35 per cent of your calories come from protein, it's more tailored to your gender, size and activity level, all of which have an impact your protein requirements.

Although men and women need slightly different amounts of protein, data is conflicting on what the specific values should be for each gender and calculations tend to be based on weight.

Weighing more doesn't always mean you need more protein, however – if you have a BMI of 30 or higher, it's a good idea to calculate your protein requirements based on your fat-free mass or muscle mass. If you live a more sedentary lifestyle, you'll also need less protein than someone who is more active.

As you get older, it becomes harder to maintain your muscle even if you're active. On average, muscle mass decreases between 3-8 per cent every 10 years after age 30 and even faster after age 60 (read more about this on page 109). The good news is that eating more protein can help counteract some of this muscle loss. This means older people tend to have higher protein requirements and may benefit from eating more than the recommended amount of protein.

If your body is working harder than normal, you may also need to up your protein intake. This may be because you're active and exercise a lot, or it may be that you're fighting off an illness.

What about if I want to put on muscle?

The recommended 0.8g of protein per kg of bodyweight is the minimum amount to avoid losing muscle. If you're actively trying to gain muscle and you're doing resistance training or using weights regularly, you may want to aim for more like 1.2-2g of protein per kg of bodyweight a day.

If you're thinking of upping your protein intake to gain muscle, it's most important to do it for the first 12 weeks of your new training regime. During this time, your muscle will need more protein to repair the damage that happens after your workouts.

After the first few weeks, your body will get used to the new level of activity and you can cut down your daily protein to more like 1.2g per kg of bodyweight.

What if I want to lose weight?

Protein can be a really useful weight loss tool as it helps you feel fuller for longer, making you less inclined to snack or overeat at your next meal. It's also important for building and maintaining muscle, which in turn increases your metabolic rate and helps you to burn more calories when at rest.

If you're trying to lose weight, research suggests that eating between 1.2-1.6g per kg (of bodyweight) of lean protein a day can help. For the best effects, try to include between 25-30g of protein in each meal.

Spreading your protein throughout the day

For your body to process protein effectively and experience all its benefits, it's best to divide your protein intake across the whole day.

Around 20-30g of protein is the ideal amount for one meal. Any more than this, and the body may struggle to absorb it and use it properly. You can also include some high-protein snacks between meals if you are feeling hungry.

Spreading your protein evenly throughout the day also helps stimulate muscle protein synthesis over a longer period of time.

> According to the British Nutrition Foundation, an adult needs 0.75g of protein per kg of bodyweight a day

PROTEIN REQUIREMENTS QUICK GUIDE

For specific advice on how much protein you need, it's always best to speak to a dietician. They'll be able to provide a personalised plan based on your unique situation and goals.

Sedentary adult	**0.75g a day** per kg of bodyweight
Active adult	**1.2-2g a day** per kg of bodyweight
Older adult	**1.2-2g a day** per kg of bodyweight
Strength athlete	**1.2-2g a day** per kg of bodyweight

WHERE TO FIND PROTEIN

So you want to increase your protein, but which foods should you be eating? Here's our handy guide...

CHICKEN BREAST

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 31g
CALORIES: 165

PRAWNS
(COOKED AND PEELED)

SERVING: 75g (2.6oz)
PROTEIN: 10g
CALORIES: 50

SALMON

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 25g
CALORIES: 210

5% FAT BEEF MINCE

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 21g
CALORIES: 130

TUNA
(CANNED IN WATER)

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 27g
CALORIES: 120

*Figures are for guidance only as products can differ. Please check product packaging for exact nutritional information.

BLACK BEANS
(TINNED)

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 5g
CALORIES: 72

EGGS

SERVING: 1 large egg
PROTEIN: 6g
CALORIES: 70

TEMPEH

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 21g
CALORIES: 208

COTTAGE CHEESE

SERVING: 110g (½ cup)
PROTEIN: 12g
CALORIES: 110

CHIA SEEDS

SERVING: 15g (½ oz)
PROTEIN: 3.5g
CALORIES: 63

MILK

SERVING: 200ml (¾ cup)
PROTEIN: 7g
CALORIES: whole - 132, semi-skimmed - 100

CHICKPEAS
(TINNED, IN WATER)

SERVING: 120g (4oz)
PROTEIN: 8g
CALORIES: 138

GREEK YOGHURT

SERVING: 170g (¾ cup)
PROTEIN: 17g
CALORIES: 100

PUMPKIN SEEDS

SERVING: 25g (1oz)
PROTEIN: 6g
CALORIES: 146

LENTILS

SERVING: 80g (2.7oz)
PROTEIN: 6g
CALORIES: 77

ALMONDS

SERVING: 30g (1oz)
PROTEIN: 6g
CALORIES: 191

PEANUT BUTTER
(NATURAL, UNSWEETENED)

SERVING: 1 tbsp
PROTEIN: 3.7g
CALORIES: 95

TOFU

SERVING: 100g (3.5oz)
PROTEIN: 16g
CALORIES: 145

QUINOA
(COOKED)

SERVING: 80g (2.7oz)
PROTEIN: 3.5g
CALORIES: 113

Can you have too much protein?

Words: The Renee McGregor Clinic

We've covered how to get enough protein, but can you have too much of a good thing? We dig deeper and separate the myths from the facts

Current recommendations suggest consuming at least 0.75g of protein per kilogram of bodyweight daily (for example, 52.5g protein for a 70kg person). While there's no established absolute maximum, research indicates we don't gain additional benefits beyond 2g of protein per kilogram daily (that's approximately 120g of protein for a 70kg person).

The potential risks of getting too much protein

The main concern if your diet is very protein focused is that it will most probably be deficient in certain micronutrients and fibre, due to lacking diversity. A diet that is excessively high in protein can lead to indigestion nausea, as the body can struggle to digest it efficiently. Additionally, there can be a risk of dehydration in ultra-high protein diets as the body uses more water in the digestion of protein in comparison to carbohydrates and fats. If the main source of protein in someone's high-protein diet is fatty red meat or processed meat, then there could be an increased risk of heart disease, certain cancers, and diabetes due to the high saturated fat and salt content.

There are many reasons why you could have the following symptoms, but if you know your diet is very high in protein and you are feeling lethargic, struggling with digestion and are dehydrated, you may want to consider reducing your protein intake or spacing out and changing the sources of protein.

Diversifying protein intake

Not all protein is created equal. Proteins are 3D structures composed of molecules called amino acids. Their sequence and resulting shape determine the type of protein created. Our bodies need 20 different amino acids to build the thousands of proteins required for the human body to function. Eleven of these are 'non-essential' amino acids, which the body can create itself. There are also nine 'essential' amino acids, and these we must source from our diet. When a food is referred to as being a 'complete protein' this means it contains all nine essential amino acids. All animal products are complete proteins, and so are some plant-based proteins like soya products, quinoa, buckwheat, chia and hemp. Often, people will opt for animal proteins over plant-based proteins as they think they are superior. However, by protein pairing (nuts with grains, seeds with lentils, etc) plant-based options can ensure your meal is a complete protein.

Try incorporating a variety of protein sources, as each offers unique health benefits:

– **Red meat:** Rich in vitamin B12 for energy production.
– **Live yoghurt:** Contains beneficial bacteria for gut health.
– **Fortified soya milk:** Excellent source of bone-strengthening calcium.
– **Beans and lentils:** Packed with heart-healthy fibre.
– **Oily fish, such as salmon:** Contains omega-3s for brain health and function.

Optimising protein timing

Earlier research suggested we couldn't absorb more than 30g of protein at once, but newer studies indicate the range might be 20-40g depending on size, muscle mass, activity level, protein type, and hydration status. However, it is recommended that 'protein pulsing' – consuming protein regularly throughout the day in meals and snacks – is more effective for reaching protein goals than concentrating intake in a single meal or shake.

Protein muscle synthesis is most efficient within 20 minutes post-exercise, which is why post-workout protein consumption is strongly advised. For optimal recovery, aim for a 3:1 carbohydrate-to-protein ratio after workouts.

Myth VS FACT

"Protein is the most important macronutrient in sport."

Protein plays a vital role in muscle repair and growth. However, it is just as important that it is consumed alongside carbohydrate so that the body has enough energy to break down the proteins and rebuild them into different proteins that the body needs, such as muscle cells, hormones and enzymes.

"High-protein diets lead to weak bones."

Due to protein intake increasing the rate that calcium is lost in the urine, it was once thought that a high-protein diet could lead to weak bones. However, current research suggests that there is no direct negative impact on bone health or higher risk of osteoporosis from a high-protein diet.

"A high-protein diet can cause kidney damage."

A healthy human body is pretty tolerant of a high-protein diet. However, if you already have any condition that affects your kidneys, it might be advised that you do not consume a high-protein diet.

"You can't have a high-protein vegetarian diet."

While an omnivore diet might make it easier to hit your protein needs, it is still very achievable with a plant-based diet. Ensuring that your diet includes beans, lentils, pulses, nuts, seeds, tofu, edamame beans, quinoa, eggs, dairy and so on, means you will hit your protein requirements.

WIN A 30 DAYS TO BUNDLE!

Be in with the chance of winning one of five *30 Days* bundles!

If you're one of our lucky winners, you'll receive a copy of each of our previous issues – *30 Days To Better Gut Health* and *30 Days to Anti-Inflammatory Diet* – plus you'll be first on the list to receive our next issue.

Oh, and did we mention you'll also get a set of Joseph Joseph Nest Utensils thrown in...? This space-saving set includes five essential kitchen tools that can be neatly stacked together, looking super stylish in your kitchen!

30 DAYS TO
Better Gut Hea
Your day-by-day guide to healing & nourishing yo
6 SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY GUT
TRANSFORM YOUR BODY FROM THE INSIDE-OUT
Improve sleep
Beat stress
Boost energy
Including 30 GUT-FRIENDLY RECIPES
NEW!
30 DAYS TO
Anti-Inflammatory Diet
Your day-by-day guide to healing and nourishing your body
NEW!
BUILD HEALTHY NEW HABITS to ease your inflammation
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Terms & conditions: Competition is open to all UK residents over the age of 18, and there are 5 prizes available to win. Only one entry per person. By entering, you are agreeing to receive emails from Anthem Publishing. You can unsubscribe from these messages at any time. Closing date: 30th June 2025.

How it works

Now we know what protein is and why we need it, it's time to get started. Learn **30 habits** from VJ Hamilton (theautoimmunitynutritionist.com) to help you feel full longer and support muscle repair, one day at a time.

WEEK 1

EASY PROTEIN UPGRADES

Getting to know your numbers 20
Supercharge one meal 22
Try Greek yoghurt.................. 24
Making the most of eggs 26
Reading the labels.................. 28
Choosing whole foods.............. 30
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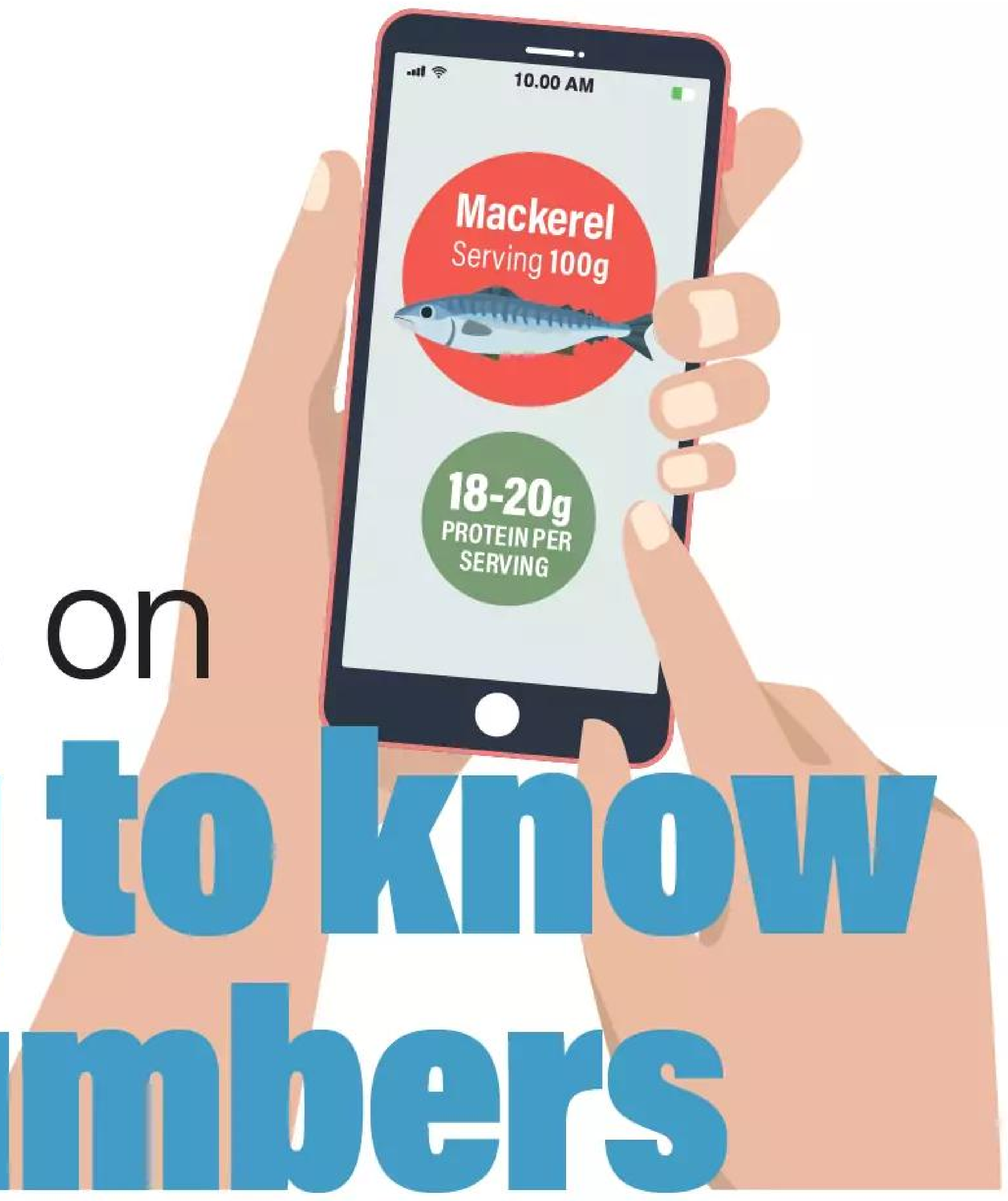


DAY 1

Today focus on getting to know your numbers

The first step in your protein journey is working out how much you need and already consume

If you want to increase your protein intake, you first need to understand how much you're already eating – and how much your body actually needs. Many people either assume they're getting enough protein or aim for vague goals like 'eat more'. Being specific is what turns intention into progress.

Protein needs vary depending on your age, activity level and health goals, but for most adults, a good place to start is around 1-1.4g of protein per kg of bodyweight per day. This means that if you weigh 70kg, you should aim for between 70-100g of protein daily. If you're very active, recovering from illness or injury, or trying to maintain or build lean muscle, your needs may be even higher.

That might sound like a lot, but once you break it down across three meals and a snack or two, it becomes much more manageable. A single egg has around 6g of protein, a 100g chicken breast contains roughly 30g, and a portion of lentils offers around 18g.

Here's how to do it...

Start by tracking your food intake for one typical day. You can do this using a free app like Cronometer or MyFitnessPal, or even with pen and paper and basic food labels. Record everything you eat and drink, and look at your total protein for the day, then break it down by meal – are you skipping protein at breakfast? Do you get most of your intake at dinner?

Once you've got your daily total, compare it to your target (e.g. 1g x your weight in kg). This gives you a personal baseline. If you're under, don't panic – this is about building your awareness, not being there right now. The next 29 habits will help you gradually bridge that gap with easy upgrades and smarter food choices.

Make it easy

Use a tracking app to log what you eat today. Aim for 1-1.6g protein per kg bodyweight as your goal.

4 apps for tracking your protein intake

Save time on those macro calculations with these clever apps

The app	Best for
MyFitnessPal	Accurate tracking, with a huge food database and barcode scanner.
Cronometer	Extremely detailed and precise macronutrient breakdowns.
MacrosFirst	Easy meal planning for athletes and those wanting to build muscle.
Lifesum	User-friendly interface and tasty meal recommendations.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

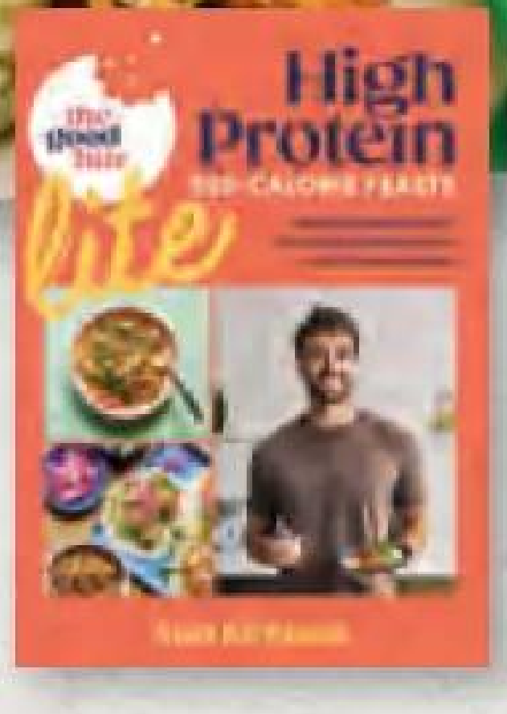
Parmesan-crusted chicken and mash

Chicken is a lean source of protein

By Niall Kirkland

Serves **2** | Prep **20 mins** | Cook **20 mins**

37.5g PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *The Good Bite Lite: 500-Calorie Feasts* by Niall Kirkland, published by Penguin Michael Joseph, £22.

For the mash

400g (2⅔ cups) white potatoes, peeled, chopped

1 tbsp reduced-fat butter spread (such as Lurpak Lighter)

1 tbsp reduced-fat crème fraîche

1 tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley

For the chicken

20g (¼ cup) breadcrumbs

20g (¼ cup) grated Parmesan

2 tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley

1 tsp garlic granules

½ tsp smoked paprika

freshly ground black pepper

1 tsp extra-virgin olive oil

250g chicken breast

sea salt

2 egg whites

For the cream cheese filling

2 tbsp light cream cheese

1 garlic clove, crushed

1 tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley

1 tbsp grated Parmesan

1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5. Boil the potatoes in a large saucepan of water for 15-20 minutes.
2. In a large bowl, mix together the ingredients from the breadcrumbs to the olive oil. In a separate bowl, mix together all the cream cheese filling ingredients until combined.
3. Lay the chicken breast flat on a board and butterfly it by slicing down the side to create two thinner breasts. Season with salt and pepper. Use a teaspoon to put the filling on top of each piece of breast.
4. Pour half the crumb mixture onto a plate and dip a breast into the egg white until coated all over – be careful not to lose any filling. Lay the breast, cream-cheese side first, onto the breadcrumb mix and flip to coat the other side. Repeat for the other breast.
5. Put the breasts on a lined baking tray. Bake for 20 minutes, or air fry at 180°C/350°F for 15-20 minutes.
6. When the potatoes are cooked through, drain and mash them. Season to taste, then stir in the light butter, crème fraîche and parsley. Serve with the chicken.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **501**, Fat **21.5g**, Saturates **8.3g**, Carbohydrate **30.4g**, Sugars **2.1g**, Fibre **3.2g**, Protein **37.5g**, Salt **1.5g**

Habit tracker

☐ **Today I...** Tracked my protein intake

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch

Chicken and quinoa salad with spinach, feta and roasted veg

Dinner

Salmon fillet, baby potatoes and green beans with cottage cheese

DAY 2 Today focus on one meal supercharging

Focus on getting 30g of protein in one meal to start you on your protein-powered journey

Trying to hit a protein target for every meal might feel overwhelming right now, when you're just getting started. That's why this habit is all about focusing on just one meal today – your most predictable one – and aiming to reach at least 30g of protein in that meal. This gives you a reference point for what 30g of protein looks and feels like, without needing to overhaul your whole day.

Why 30g? Research shows that 25-30g of protein per meal helps stimulate muscle protein synthesis, improves satiety and supports blood sugar regulation. It's a sweet spot for most people.

Here's how to do it...

Choose the meal you're most likely to be in control of – typically breakfast or dinner. Plan around a solid protein anchor: two eggs and Greek yoghurt for breakfast; a chicken breast; a tin of salmon; or a block of tofu for dinner. From there, layer in smaller additions: a spoonful of seeds, beans or lentils, cottage cheese, quinoa, or a protein-rich veg like edamame.

Keep track with a nutrition app, or use online charts to get a rough sense of each ingredient's protein value (or you can just check the back of the packaging of course!) Try a chickpea and quinoa bowl with feta, or a turkey burger with sweet potato and salad. If you're plant-based, combine grains and legumes – such as brown rice and black beans – to provide you with a complete protein profile.

Once you master one high-protein meal, you'll be better prepared to build the same habits into the rest of your day.

Make it easy

Plan ahead and build your 30g around a main protein source. Once you've got that one meal sorted, you can repeat a few times every week. If you record the protein for that meal and what's in it, you can build up a catalogue so you don't have to work it out every time.

4 ways to add more protein to your favourite meals

Boost your protein intake with these simple additions to recipes you know like the back of your hand

On the menu	Protein boost
Soup	Stir in 100g of red lentils to add a nutty flavour and a bonus 9g of protein per serving.
Stir-fried rice	Replace the rice with quinoa (8g of protein per 185g serving), scramble in an egg (6g of protein) or add some tofu (20g of protein per 100g serving).
Mac and cheese	Mix 100g of cottage cheese into your sauce for an extra 14g of protein and top with 100g of shredded chicken (24g of protein).
Tacos	Swap your sour cream for Greek yoghurt, which has 12g of protein per 114g serving.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Lentil beef meatballs

Lentils and beef are great sources of protein in this one-pan dish

By Claire Thomson

Serves **4** | Prep **10 mins** (plus chilling) | Cook **18-20 mins**

37g PROTEIN PER SERVING

One Pan BEANS

Recipe taken from *One Pan Beans* by Claire Thomson, photography by Sam Folan, published by Quadrille, £20.

For the meatballs

500g (2¼ cups) minced beef

150g (⅔ cup) ricotta

120g (½ cup) drained cooked or tinned green or speckled lentils

1 egg

50g (½ cup) fine dried white breadcrumbs

20g (¼ cup) Parmesan or pecorino, finely grated, plus more to serve

4 sage leaves, very finely chopped

freshly grated nutmeg

olive oil, for frying

salt and freshly ground black pepper

For the tomato sauce

2 tbsp olive oil

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

10 sage leaves

400g (1⅔ cups) tomato passata (strained tomatoes)

120g (½ cup) drained cooked or tinned green or speckled lentils

a pinch of chilli flakes (optional), plus more to serve

1. For the meatballs, in a large bowl, mix all the ingredients and season well with nutmeg, salt and pepper.
2. Knead the mixture for 5 minutes until it just begins to feel cohesive and a bit sticky. Allow to rest for at least 30 minutes to 2 hours in the fridge.
3. Wet your hands and roll the mixture into balls the size of a ping-pong ball. Put the balls on a plate in the fridge to firm up for 30 minutes or more.
4. In a large frying pan over moderate heat, fry the balls in a film of olive oil in a single layer, in batches if needed, for 5-8 minutes until browned, then place on a plate to the side.
5. In the same pan, add the 2 tbsp olive oil, the garlic and sage and cook for 30 seconds until aromatic.
6. Add the passata and season with salt and pepper. Bring to the boil, then turn the heat down to a simmer and cook for 10 minutes until the sauce thickens. Stir through the lentils and chilli (if using) and check the seasoning.
7. Add the meatballs to the sauce to gently warm through, then serve topped with a grating of Parmesan and a few more chilli flakes (if using).

PER SERVING:

Calories: **580**, Fat **37g**, Saturates **13.8g**, Carbohydrate **26g**, Sugars **4.3g**, Fibre **4.4g**, Protein **37g**, Salt **1.2g**

Habit tracker

☐ **Today I...** Had at least one meal with 30g protein

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today
Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast
Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch
Lentil and egg power bowl with sweet potato and tahini drizzle

Dinner
Chickpea pasta with veggie-loaded tomato sauce and grated cheese

DAY 3

Today focus on Greek yoghurt

Greek yoghurt may quickly become your new best friend as it's a true protein powerhouse

Yoghurt is often considered a healthy food, but not all yoghurts are created equal – especially when it comes to protein. If you're relying on traditional yoghurts, you may only be getting 5-8g of protein per 150g serving. That's fine as a snack, but not as useful if you're trying to build higher-protein meals that keep you satisfied and energised.

Enter Greek yoghurt and its close cousin, Icelandic-style skyr. Thanks to a special straining process, these yoghurts are naturally thicker and contain a lot more protein – around 15-20g per 150g serving, depending on the brand. That's more than double, sometimes triple, the amount you'll find in a regular pot.

But it's not just the protein content that makes Greek yoghurt a smart choice. It's also versatile, creamy, and satisfying. You can use it in both sweet and savoury dishes, from breakfast bowls to salad dressings, dips and sauces. It also pairs well with fruit, oats, nuts, seeds, and a drizzle of honey or cinnamon for a quick protein-rich snack or breakfast.

Here's how:

When shopping, read the labels on the pots carefully. Choose plain Greek yoghurt and aim for at least 10g of protein per 100g. Avoid flavoured varieties that are loaded with sugar or artificial sweeteners. Also, watch out for "Greek-style" yoghurt, which may be thickened with cream and not strained, meaning it doesn't offer the same protein punch.

If you're dairy-free, there are now many plant-based yoghurts that are fortified with pea or soy protein that can give you 10-15g of protein per serving. Check labels, as protein content varies widely across brands.

Make it easy

Keep a few tubs of Greek yoghurt in your fridge as a staple. Use it in smoothies, overnight oats, salad dressings, creamy sauces, or even as a swap for sour cream.

4 *ways* to add Greek yoghurt to any meal

Greek yoghurt is super versatile and packed with protein – here's how to use it in your meals

Meal times	Greek yoghurt swap
Breakfast	Instead of cereal or porridge, try a serving of Greek yoghurt (114g) topped with nuts or seeds, sliced banana and a drizzle of honey.
Lunch	Top a jacket potato with a dollop of Greek yoghurt mixed with baked salmon, capers and dill.
Snack	For a tasty protein smoothie, combine a serving of Greek yoghurt with some frozen berries, banana and your choice of milk. You can even add protein powder for an extra boost.
Dinner	Swap cream for Greek yoghurt in your favourite pasta sauce for some extra protein without compromising on flavour.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

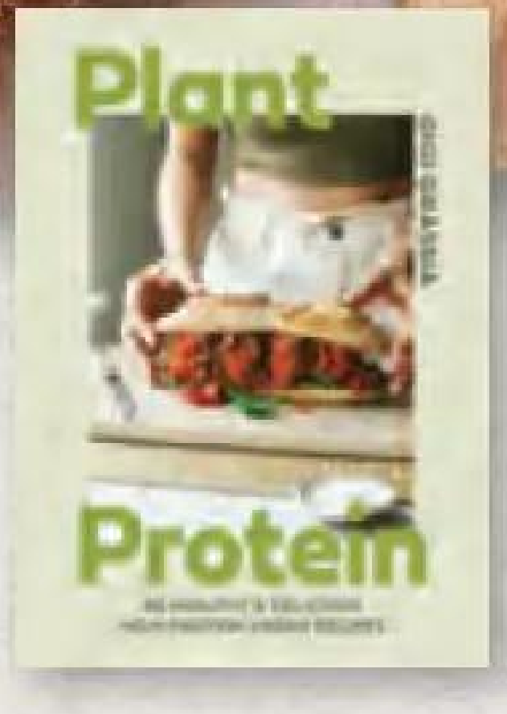
Edamame toast with tofu scramble

Opt for Greek or vegan yoghurt with this plant-based breakfast

By Gigi Grassia

Serves **2-3** | Prep **20 mins** | Cook **10 mins**

34g
PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *Plant Protein* by Gigi Grassia, published by Greenfinch, £22.

For the smashed edamame

- 150g (2½ cups) cooked edamame beans (defrosted if frozen)
- 75g (generous ¼ cup) Greek or high-protein plant-based yoghurt
- a handful of basil, plus extra to serve
- 2 sun-dried tomatoes, chopped, plus extra to serve
- 1 garlic clove
- 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
- juice of ½ a lemon, plus 1 tsp grated zest
- 1 tbsp olive oil

For the tofu scramble

- 100g (½ cup) silken tofu
- 4 tbsp soya milk
- 1 tsp cornflour (cornstarch)
- 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 1 tbsp plant-based butter
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- ½ tsp ground turmeric
- 100g (½ cup) firm smoked tofu, drained, pressed, crumbled
- ½ tsp kala namak (black salt)
- 2-3 slices of sourdough bread and plant-based butter, to serve

1 For the smashed edamame, combine all the ingredients in a food processor and roughly blend until creamy, but still with visible chunks of edamame and tomato. Taste and check the seasoning, transfer to a bowl and set aside.

2 For the scramble, in the clean bowl of the food processor, combine the silken tofu, milk, cornflour and yeast and blend until smooth, scraping the sides as necessary. It should be liquid, it thickens when it cooks.

3 Heat the butter in a frying pan over medium heat and fry the onion with the turmeric for 5 minutes until golden and soft. Add the crumbled firm tofu and stir gently to combine without breaking up the chunks.

4 Add the silken tofu mixture and black salt and season with regular salt and pepper to taste. Mix gently and warm through for 1 minute.

5 Toast the bread and spread with butter, then spoon a portion of smashed edamame onto each slice and top with tofu scramble. Finish with extra basil leaves or sun-dried tomatoes, if desired.

PER SERVING:
Calories: **534**, Fat **25.9g**, Saturates **5g**, Carbohydrate **40.8g**, Sugars **8g**, Fibre **9g**, Protein **34g**, Salt **1.2g**

Habit tracker

○ **Today I...** Added Greek yoghurt to at least one meal

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

2 eggs on wholegrain toast with cottage cheese and wilted spinach

Lunch

Tuna niçoise-style salad (tuna, egg, potatoes, green beans, olives)

Dinner

Tofu or tempeh stir-fry with veg, edamame, and soy sauce over brown rice

DAY 4

Today focus on making the most of eggs

Eggs are an affordable, accessible and efficient source of high-quality protein

Just one large egg provides around 6-7g of protein, along with a broad spectrum of essential nutrients, including choline (important for brain health), selenium, vitamin B12, and fat-soluble vitamins like A and D. Unlike many other protein-rich foods, eggs require little prep time and can be cooked in a variety of ways, meaning they easily fit into your day.

Despite this, many people stop at one or two eggs, thinking more might be 'too much'. But for most people, three eggs can be comfortably included in a meal without exceeding dietary fat or cholesterol guidelines, especially when paired with vegetables or whole grains.

Here's how to do it...

Start by incorporating more eggs into your breakfast. Scrambled, poached or boiled eggs provide a great base for a high-protein meal. Three eggs deliver up to 21g of protein, and when paired with something like sautéed spinach, smoked salmon, mushrooms or avocado, you've got a nutrient-dense, filling plate.

Batch cook eggs for convenience. Hard-boiled eggs can be prepped at the start of the week and stored in the fridge for up to seven days. They make a handy snack, a salad topper, or a lunch option paired with oatcakes, veg sticks or fruit.

Want something more portable? Make muffins – whisk eggs with chopped vegetables, herbs, and maybe a bit of cheese, then pour into muffin tins and bake. These freeze well and reheat quickly.

You can also use eggs creatively at lunch or dinner: top a salad with a soft-boiled egg, stir a beaten egg into a stir-fry, crack one into a curry or soup, or fold an extra into an omelette for added protein. Eggs are easy to flavour, versatile in texture, and can be eaten hot or cold, making them the ultimate protein staple.

Make it easy

Add an extra egg to your usual meals to top up the protein content. Keep a batch of boiled eggs in the fridge for easy, grab-and-go protein all week.

4 top tips to eat more eggs

You don't have to snack on boiled eggs all day – here are fuss-free ways to sneak extra eggs into your diet

On the menu	Add an egg
Porridge	As you're cooking your porridge oats, whisk in an egg to make them even more creamy and filling.
Soup	Stirring an egg into your favourite hot broth makes a quick egg drop soup: the perfect cosy lunch.
Noodles	A hard-boiled or fried egg is a delicious addition to a stir-fry or bowl of ramen noodles.
Mashed potatoes	Adding an egg to your mashed potatoes gives them a smooth texture and rich flavour.

20g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Spanish omelette with peas and onion

Start the day right with an egg-and-veg packed omelette

By Scott Harrison

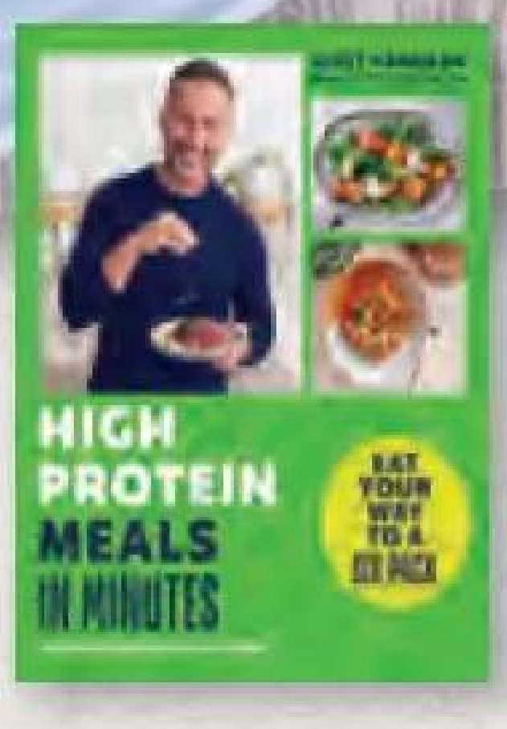
Serves **2** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **15 mins**

- **2 tsp extra-virgin olive oil**
- **a handful of sweet potato, peeled and finely sliced**
- **1 medium white or red onion, thinly sliced**
- **a pinch of chilli flakes**
- **1 tsp paprika**
- **a handful of frozen peas**
- **1 heaped tsp of chopped chives**
- **4-6 eggs, lightly beaten**
- **freshly ground black pepper**

1. Heat the olive oil in a non-stick frying pan over low heat. Add the sweet potatoes, put a lid on top and cook for 7-8 minutes, turning often to ensure they do not burn.
2. Now add the onion, chilli flakes, and paprika. Mix everything together carefully and cook for another 3 minutes with the lid on.
3. Add the peas, half the chives, and then the eggs.
4. Season with black pepper and sprinkle the remaining chives over the top.
5. Cook on low heat for 5 minutes and brown the top under the grill (broiler), if necessary. Serve immediately or eat cold later.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **330**, Fat **22g**, Saturates **5g**, Carbohydrate **10g**, Sugars **5g**, Fibre **3g**, Protein **20g**, Salt **0.5g**



Recipe taken from *High Protein Meals in Minutes* by Scott Harrison, published by DK Red, £18.99.

Habit tracker

Today I... Increased my egg consumption

Do this... **4-5 DAYS A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

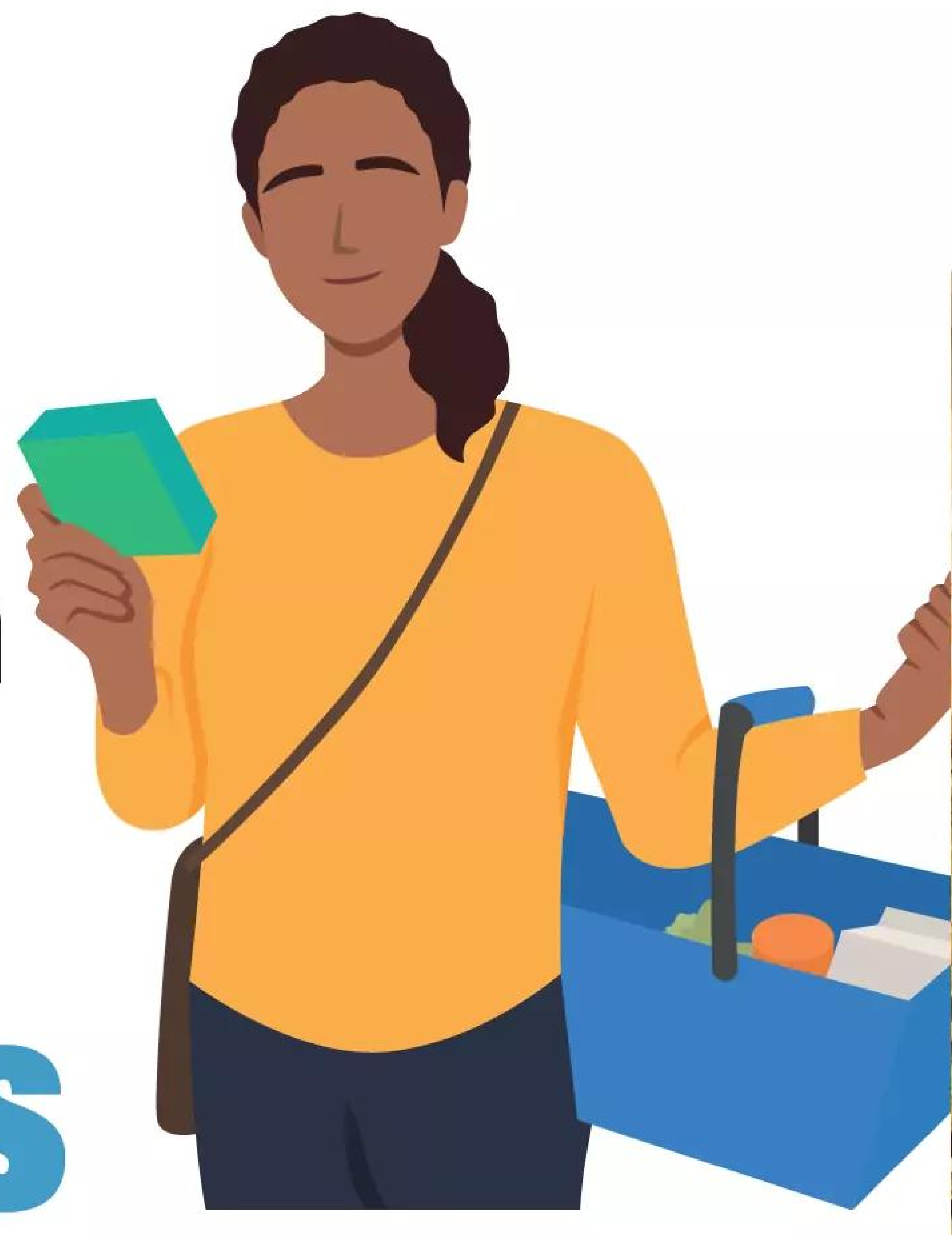
2 eggs on wholegrain toast with cottage cheese and wilted spinach

Lunch

Chicken and quinoa salad with spinach, feta and roasted veg

Dinner

Chickpea and spinach curry with a scoop of Greek yoghurt and brown rice



DAY 5

Today focus on reading the labels

Get into the habit of reading labels in the supermarket to make better protein choices

We've all seen it – snack bars, drinks, cereals and even sweets, boasting 'high protein' on the pack front. Take a closer look at the nutrition label and the numbers often tell a different story. Food marketing is clever, but it can be misleading. A product might shout about protein on the front while only delivering 5g per serving, while a less flashy item (such as a plain tub of Greek yoghurt) might quietly provide 15g or more.

Reading food labels properly is one of the most useful nutrition skills you can build – especially if you're trying to increase protein without relying on heavily processed options.

Here's how to do it...

Start by flipping the pack over. Head straight to the nutrition panel and find the 'Protein' row. You'll usually see two columns: per 100g and per serving. Use the per 100g column to compare similar products, like different brands of yoghurt or plant milk. Use the per serving column to understand what you're actually getting based on how much you'll eat.

As a guide, aim for at least 8-10g of protein per serving for snacks, and 15-30g for meals. When comparing options, don't just focus on protein – check the sugar, saturated fat and fibre content too. A protein bar might have 10g protein, but 20g of sugar, which may not be worth it.

It's also worth a look at the ingredient list. If protein comes from whole foods (such as nuts, seeds, legumes), that's good. If it's packed with fillers, gums, or sweeteners, it might not be the best choice.

Once you start checking labels regularly, you'll quickly build a mental shortlist of high-protein staples to return to each week. This also empowers you to spot protein where you didn't expect it – in some cereals, soups, breads and grains.

Make it easy

Flip the pack. Check the protein per serving and per 100g on the food label – ignore any front-of-pack claims, which can be misleading, and find out what it actually delivers.

What to look out for on food labels

Here's how to decode the small print on your supermarket buys

What to look for	What it means
Protein per serving	This is how much protein you'll find in each serving, usually in grams, and is one of the most important numbers you're looking for.
Ingredients list	This is where you'll find all the components of a product. Look out for whole food proteins such as lentils, soy and whey and avoid 'protein-fortified' fillers.
Sugar per serving	Often, protein-dense foods can be full of sugary additives. Look out for the sugar content per serving and aim to keep this lower.
Other macronutrients	Check the ratio of protein to other macronutrients in the nutritional information. Chicken, for example, will have more protein and less fat compared to something like bacon.

22g
PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Shakshuka egg bowls

You'll find plenty of whole food proteins in this breakfast shakshuka

Serves **2** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **15-16 mins**

- **220g (1½ cups) cherry tomatoes, sliced**
- **2 red peppers, chopped**
- **1 small red onion, peeled, chopped**
- **2 garlic cloves, peeled, sliced**
- **1 tsp ground cumin**
- **1 tsp smoked paprika**
- **2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil**
- **salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste**
- **4 free-range eggs**
- **100g (1 cup) feta, crumbled**
- **fresh mint, chopped, to garnish**
- **toasted ciabatta slices, to serve**

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6 or air fryer to 180°C/360°F. In one or two heatproof dishes that fit inside the oven/fryer, combine the tomatoes, red peppers, onion, garlic, cumin, smoked paprika, olive oil, salt and pepper. Stir to mix.
2. Cook for 15-18 minutes in the oven, or 8 minutes in the air fryer.
3. Remove the dish and make four wells in the veg mixture. Crack an egg into each well, then sprinkle the top with crumbled feta.
4. Return to the oven or fryer and cook for 7-10 minutes more, or until the eggs are set to your liking.
5. Garnish with fresh mint and serve with toasted ciabatta slices.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **473**, Fat **35.1g**, Saturates **12g**, Carbohydrate **22g**, Sugars **11.6g**, Fibre **4.8g**, Protein **22.1g**, Salt **2.4g**

Habit tracker

○ **Today I...** Checked the nutritional labels on my ingredients

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch

Lentil and egg power bowl with sweet potato and tahini drizzle

Dinner

Pan-fried cod with couscous and roasted courgette and peppers

DAY 6

Today focus on choosing whole foods

Opt for whole foods – naturally high in protein, better for your health and often cheaper too

With protein-fortified products everywhere (bars, cereals, shakes, even chocolate) it's tempting to lean on these 'quick fixes' to boost your intake. While convenient, many of these items are ultra-processed, packed with added sugars, artificial flavours, gums or low-quality protein isolates. They may give a short-term protein hit, but they're rarely as satisfying – or beneficial – as whole foods.

Whole foods give you protein in its most bioavailable, nutrient-rich form, often with essential fats, vitamins, minerals and fibre that support recovery, gut health and immune function. Building meals around whole foods is one of the most sustainable and effective ways to improve your protein intake – while supporting long-term health.

Here's how to do it...

Start each meal by choosing a whole food protein anchor: chicken breast, salmon, eggs, lentils, cottage cheese, beans, tempeh or edamame. Layer in colourful vegetables, healthy fats (such as olive oil or avocado), and slow-digesting carbohydrates such as sweet potato, brown rice or quinoa. This keeps your blood sugar stable, supports fullness, and gives your body what it actually needs – not just isolated macronutrients.

Instead of a 'high-protein' granola bar for breakfast, try scrambled eggs or Greek yoghurt with fruit and seeds. Instead of a protein shake for lunch, prep a lentil and veggie soup, or tuna-quinoa salad. For sweetness, make protein bites from oats, nut butter, chia seeds and protein powder – you control the ingredients and sugar.

Batch cooking helps too. Roast a tray of salmon, hard-boil eggs, cook a pot of beans or stew up a lentil curry. These whole food staples can carry you through the week. Whole foods may take a bit more time, but they're better for your body and budget.

Make it easy

Build meals around whole protein sources like chicken, fish, eggs or lentils. Save processed snacks for backup, not your main strategy.

4 *homemade* alternatives to protein bars

Make your own protein snacks at home with these quick recipes

The snack	How to make it	Protein content
Greek yoghurt bowl	Top 240g (1 cup) of Greek yoghurt with a handful of nuts and seeds, squeezing over some honey or adding a sprinkle of cinnamon for sweetness.	20-25g
Egg and cheese grazing pot	Hard boil two eggs and slice up a few chunks of Cheddar cheese. It sounds simple, but this is so easy to prep ahead of time and pop in your bag as a snack.	15-20g
Chicken salad crackers	Combine a shredded chicken breast with a tablespoon of Greek yoghurt or mayo, season and spread onto wholegrain crackers.	25g
Peanut butter and banana rice cakes	Spread 2 tablespoons of peanut butter onto a rice cake and then top it with a sliced banana.	15g

33g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Quinoa-crumbed fish and veggie chips

Air frying is a healthy way to cook this better-for-you fakeaway

By Fern Green

Serves **2** | Prep **8 mins** | Cook **14 mins**

- **2 fresh cod, hake or halibut fillets**
- **1 lemon, plus a lemon to slice on top (optional)**
- **120g (⅔ cup) quinoa**
- **½ tsp paprika**
- **1 sweet potato, peeled, cut into batons**
- **1 beetroot, peeled, cut into batons**
- **1 tbsp polenta (cornmeal), to dust**
- **olive oil spray**
- **a pinch of salt**

1. Prepare the fish by squeezing half a lemon over each fillet. Spray on a little olive oil and season with salt and paprika.
2. Pour the quinoa into a bowl and season. Dip each fish into the quinoa and lay in the basket of an air fryer.
3. Spray the sweet potato and beetroot. Season and dust with polenta for extra crispiness, then lay them in the bottom tray of the air fryer if possible, or cook in batches.
4. Air fry the fish at 180°C/360°F for 9 minutes and 12 minutes for the chips, until golden and crispy. Pop some lemon slices on top of the fish 1 minute before it finishes cooking to add a little extra flavour. If you don't have an air fryer, bake the fish in the oven at 200°C/Gas Mark 6 for 15-18 minutes, and the chips for 25-30 minutes.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **400**, Fat **8g**, Saturates **1.5g**, Carbohydrate **45g**, Sugars **8g**, Fibre **6g**, Protein **33g**, Salt **0.3g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Chose whole foods over processed 'high protein' products

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch

Tuna niçoise-style salad (tuna, egg, potatoes, green beans, olives)

Dinner

Burrito bowl with black beans, eggs, cottage cheese, quinoa and salsa

DAY 7

Today focus on adding seeds to your breakfast

Seeds are small yet mighty and pack a very useful nutritional punch to your meals

Seeds might be small, but they are nutritional powerhouses – especially when it comes to protein, fibre and healthy fats. If you're looking for an easy way to upgrade breakfast and increase your daily protein intake, this is a habit worth adopting.

Seeds such as hemp, chia, flax and pumpkin are incredibly versatile and nutrient-dense. Just one tablespoon of hemp seeds contains about 10g of protein, while chia and flaxseeds provide 3-5g. That might sound small, but when used daily, it adds up, especially when combined with other protein sources such as eggs, Greek yoghurt, protein oats or nut butter.

Beyond protein, seeds also deliver omega-3 fatty acids, magnesium, zinc, selenium and fibre. These nutrients support muscle repair, immune health, energy production and digestion – all vital if you're aiming to build resilience and eat in a more functional way.

Here's how to do it...

Create a custom breakfast seed mix. Combine equal parts hemp, chia, flax and pumpkin seeds in a jar and store it somewhere visible, for example on a kitchen counter, next to a coffee machine or blender. Use 1-2 tbsp daily as a topping or blend-in. Add the seed mix to Greek yoghurt and berries, stir into warm porridge or protein oats, or blend into smoothies.

You can also stir chia or flaxseed into overnight oats or make chia pudding: mix 2 tbsp chia with plant milk and leave overnight for a protein-rich breakfast.

For extra crunch, dry-toast the seed mix in a pan for 2-3 minutes. This adds flavour and can also be sprinkled over savoury breakfasts like avocado toast or eggs.

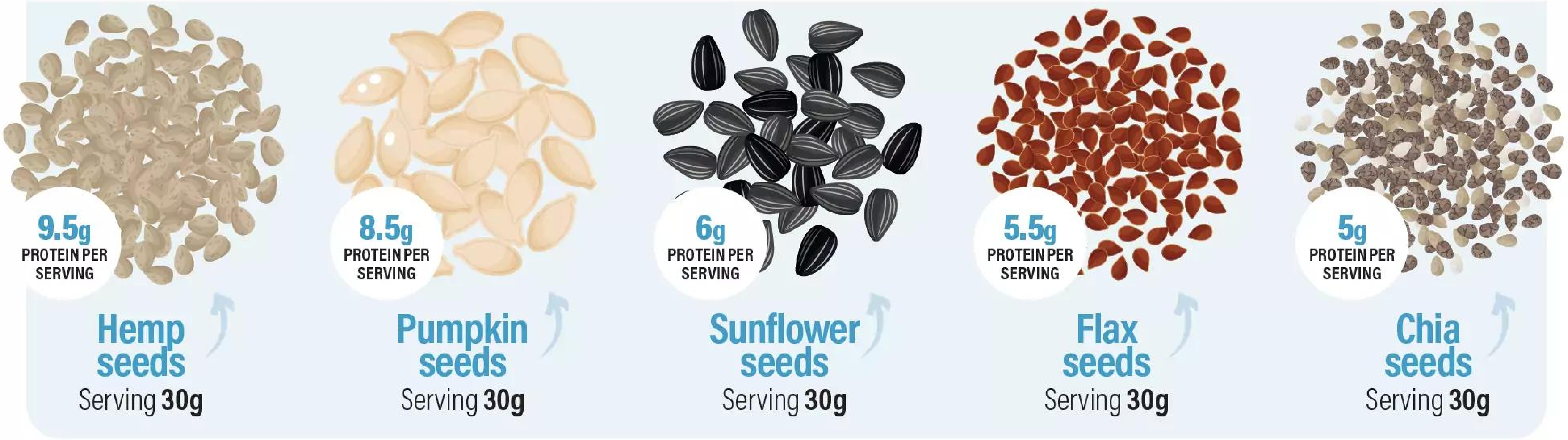
For those with nut or seed allergies, sunflower or sesame seeds may be suitable (check with your practitioner). While lower in protein, they're still rich in minerals and can be used in similar ways.

Make it easy

Make a breakfast seed mix and store it next to your kettle or blender. Add 1-2 tbsp daily to suitable meals for a protein upgrade.

How much protein do you get from seeds?

Here's how much protein you'll find in these easily available seeds



Seeds	Protein per serving	Serving
Hemp seeds	9.5g	30g
Pumpkin seeds	8.5g	30g
Sunflower seeds	6g	30g
Flax seeds	5.5g	30g
Chia seeds	5g	30g

RECIPE OF THE DAY

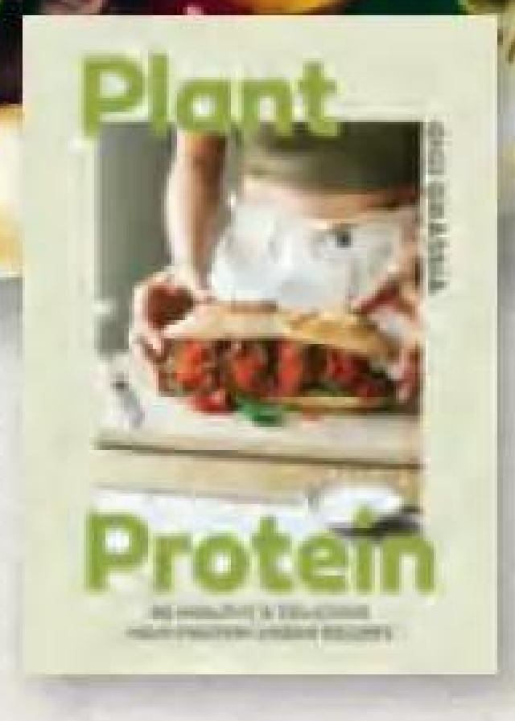
Greek-inspired salad with tofu 'feta'

Top this Greek-style salad with a handful of seeds

By Gigi Grassia

Serves **2-3** | Prep **15 mins** | Cook **5 mins**

23g PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *Plant Protein* by Gigi Grassia, published by Greenfinch, £22.

For the tofu 'feta'

- juice of 1 lemon, plus 2 tbsp grated zest
- 1 tsp miso paste (or a pinch of salt)
- 2 tbsp nutritional yeast
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 250g (1¼ cups) firm tofu, drained and pressed, cut into 1.5cm (½in) cubes

For the salad

- 20g (2½ tbsp) mixed seeds (roughly equal amounts of chia, sunflower, pumpkin)
- ½ a cucumber, halved lengthwise, deseeded, cut into 2cm (¾in) thick pieces
- 100g (½ cup) drained tinned chickpeas (garbanzos)
- ½ a red onion, sliced
- 20g (⅛ cup) Kalamata olives, pitted, chopped
- 100g (⅔ cup) cherry tomatoes, halved
- a handful of mint leaves, chopped

For the dressing

- 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp flaky sea salt
- 1 tsp freshly ground black pepper

1. First, marinate the tofu. Combine the lemon juice and zest, miso, yeast, olive oil and a splash of water in a lidded container and whisk until well combined. Add the cubed tofu, close the container and shake. Let the tofu marinate while you prepare the salad.
2. For the dressing, combine all the ingredients in a bowl and whisk until combined.
3. Put the mixed seeds into a dry frying pan and toast them over a low heat until they start to sizzle and pop. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.
4. Meanwhile, combine the remaining ingredients for the salad in a large bowl. Add the marinated 'feta' along with its marinade and the dressing and seeds. Toss to combine.
5. The tofu 'feta' can be made the day before and kept in the fridge overnight to marinate.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **480**, Fat **35g**, Saturates **5g**, Carbohydrate **20g**, Sugars **6g**, Fibre **7g**, Protein **23g**, Salt **1.5g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Added seeds to at least one meal

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

End of week reflection

The habit I enjoyed most this week was...

My favourite meal this week was...

The habit I think benefited me most was...

My biggest takeaway from this week is...

The habit I struggled with most was...

My new favourite ingredient is...

Overall this week my energy has been...

Average protein amount per day:

Amount of water I drank each day...

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

2 eggs on wholegrain toast with cottage cheese and wilted spinach

Lunch

Chicken and quinoa salad with spinach, feta and roasted veg

Dinner

Veggie stir-fry with tofu, edamame, cashews, and rice noodles

DAY 8

Today focus on swapping white rice for quinoa

Wins don't get much easier than changing your regular white rice for quinoa instead

White rice may be a comfort food staple, but when it comes to protein, it doesn't offer much. A standard serving (about 150g cooked) provides only 2-3g of protein, and although it supplies carbohydrates, it's low in fibre and micronutrients. That makes it easy to overeat and less satisfying – especially if you're trying to build meals that will keep you feeling full for longer and more energised.

Quinoa, on the other hand, is a grain-like seed that delivers much more. One cup of cooked quinoa provides about 8g of protein, more than double that of white rice. It's also one of the few plant-based foods that's considered to be a complete protein, containing all nine essential amino acids – making it especially valuable in vegetarian or plant-forward diets.

Quinoa is also rich in fibre, magnesium, iron and slow-digesting carbohydrates, which help stabilise blood sugar, improve energy levels and support digestive and metabolic health.

Here's how to do it...

Cook quinoa just like rice: rinse it well first to remove its natural bitter coating (called saponin), then simmer in water or stock using a 1:2 ratio – 1 cup quinoa to 2 cups liquid – for about 12-15 minutes until fluffy. You can cook it plain or add flavour with a bay leaf, garlic clove, or stock cube.

Use quinoa as a base for grain bowls, mix it into salads, or serve as a protein-rich side dish. Stir into soups, stuff into peppers, or make a quinoa tabbouleh with parsley, lemon and olive oil. For even more protein, pair it with baked chicken breast, chickpeas, grilled tofu, or a soft-boiled egg.

Make it easy

Batch cook quinoa at the start of the week and keep it in the fridge for up to 4 days. You can also find frozen quinoa in supermarkets.

4 *simple* quinoa upgrades

Boost flavour with these easy alterations next time you're cooking quinoa

Top tip	How to
Swap water for stock	When you're boiling quinoa, try using chicken or vegetable stock instead of water for extra flavour. Add a bay leaf or garlic clove for extra depth.
Get toasting	Dry toast your quinoa in a pan for a couple of minutes before adding water for a nuttier flavour.
Add herbs and spices	Get creative and mix in some fresh coriander or parsley, or season with cumin or paprika. You could even add some grated lemon zest for a citrus twist.
Dress it up	Stir in some pesto, soy sauce or tahini dressing for a juicy texture and a punch of flavour.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Satay chickpea and quinoa salad

Quinoa makes a delicious base for this protein-dense, peanut salad

By Sophie Waplington

Serves **3** | Prep **20 mins** | Cook **15 mins**

31g PROTEIN PER SERVING

For the salad

- 150g (¾ cup) tricolour quinoa
- 1 large or 2 small carrots, peeled and julienned or grated
- 1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
- ¼ red cabbage, thinly sliced
- ⅓ green sweetheart cabbage, thin sliced
- 1 small cucumber, deseeded, cut into 5mm (¼in) half-moons
- 150g (¾ cup) firm smoked tofu, grated or crumbled
- 700g (4 cups) tinned chickpeas, drained and rinsed

For the sauce

- 4 heaped tbsp peanut butter
- a thumb-size piece of fresh ginger, peeled, grated
- 3 garlic cloves
- 2 tbsp soy sauce or tamari
- 2 tbsp rice vinegar
- 1 tbsp agave or maple syrup
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 3-4 tbsp warm water

To serve

- 70g (½ cup) raw peanuts
- small handful of fresh coriander (cilantro) leaves
- lime wedges
- red chilli, thinly sliced
- sesame seeds

1. Cook the quinoa according to pack instructions. Add stock powder for extra flavour here!
2. Add all the sliced vegetables to a large bowl, saving one or two bits of each on the side for garnish. Grate the tofu and add this too, along with the cooked and cooled quinoa.
3. In a blender cup, blend all the sauce ingredients together. Season to taste. Pour a third into the quinoa-tofu mixture, tossing well with your hands, then combine the rest with the chickpeas in another bowl.
4. Gently toast the raw peanuts in a dry frying pan for 5-7 minutes, then roughly bash them while warm in a pestle and mortar with a medium pinch of salt. Taste and season to your liking.
5. Divide the salad between bowls, then generously ladle the peanut butter chickpeas over the salad.
6. Garnish with coriander, lime wedges, chilli, the crushed peanuts, sesame seeds and the veggies you kept to the side.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **620**, Fat **35g**, Saturates **6g**, Carbohydrate **45g**, Sugars **10g**, Fibre **10g**, Protein **31g**, Salt **1.5g**

Recipe taken from *Soph's Plant Kitchen* by Sophie Waplington, published by Yellow Kite in hardback, £25.

Habit tracker

Today I... Swapped white rice for quinoa

Do this... **2-4 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Protein smoothie (protein powder, banana, almond milk, peanut butter, Greek yoghurt)

Lunch

High-protein wrap with grilled chicken, houmous and salad

Dinner

Turkey mince and bean chilli with brown rice, topped with Greek yoghurt

DAY 9

Today focus on low-cost protein choices

Higher protein diets don't have to be expensive when you know how to make the right choices

When people think of high-protein foods, they often picture things like steak, salmon, or protein shakes, and, while those can play a role, they're not the only options. In fact, some of the most accessible and cost-effective protein sources are also among the most nutritious.

Low-cost protein sources like eggs, beans, lentils, tofu, cottage cheese and tinned fish are widely available, easy to store and versatile. They can be the backbone of budget-friendly meals.

Here's how to do it...

Keep your cupboard stocked with tinned or dried beans: chickpeas, kidney beans, black beans and lentils. These cost pennies per portion, last for months and provide about 7-9g of protein per half-cup cooked, along with fibre, iron, and B vitamins. Add them to soups, stews, curries, or pasta dishes, or use them in cold salads or as dips.

Eggs are a complete protein source and provide 6-7g of protein per egg. They're quick to cook, easy to bulk buy, and work for any meal. Scramble for breakfast, boil for lunchboxes, or bake into muffins – they're endlessly useful. Tofu and tempeh are underrated sources that adapt to any cuisine. They're high in plant protein, can cost less than £2 per pack, and can be fried, marinated, baked or blended into sauces.

Tinned fish (such as sardines, salmon or mackerel) contains 20-25g protein per tin, plus omega-3 fats. Serve it with seeded bread, in chickpea pasta, on quinoa crackers, or added to wild rice bowls. Tinned tuna is another shelf-stable favourite and can be used in wraps, salads or baked into fishcakes.

Don't forget cottage cheese or Greek yoghurt, available in large tubs for better value and with 10-15g of protein per 100g. Combine ingredients for even more value and balance – think beans with quinoa, eggs with toast, or tofu with frozen veg.

Make it easy

Use affordable staples like beans, eggs, tofu and tinned fish to hit your protein goals without stretching your food budget.

4 *great* protein sources that don't break the bank

These supermarket buys will give you a protein boost on a budget

The product	The price
Dried chickpeas	At £3.50 per kilogram, and with 19g of protein per cooked 100g serving, that's 1.8p per gram of protein.
Eggs	If you buy 12 free range eggs for about £3, you're looking at 4.2p per gram of protein.
Tinned tuna	Look out for bigger packs of tinned tuna to save even more money – a pack of eight 100g tins will cost just £8. With 24g of protein in a tin, that's 4.1p per gram.
Skimmed milk	There's about 36g of protein in a litre of skimmed milk. At about £1 a litre, that's 2.8p per gram.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Lentil and mushroom ragù

Feed the family and hit your protein goal without breaking the bank

By Emma Bardwell

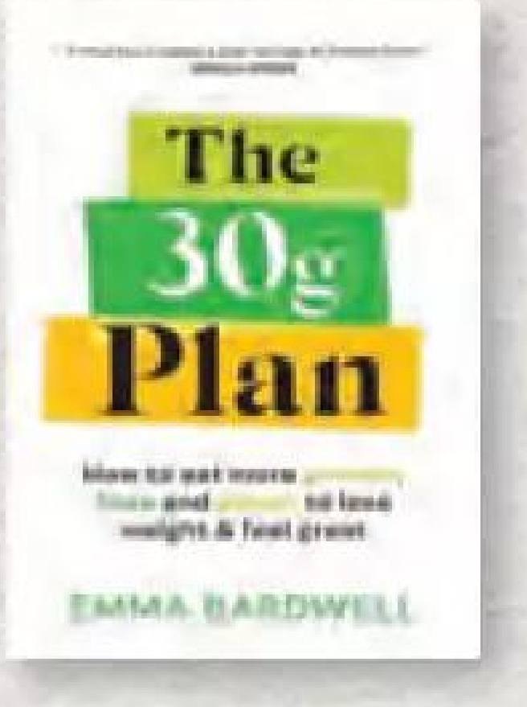
Serves **2** | Prep **15 mins** | Cook **30 mins**

30g
PROTEIN PER SERVING

- **1 tbsp olive oil**
- **125g (1 cup) red lentil spaghetti**
- **300g (3 cups) chestnut mushrooms, thinly sliced**
- **1 medium red onion, finely diced**
- **2 garlic cloves, minced**
- **3 medium tomatoes, diced**
- **1 pouch (250g) of ready cooked puy lentils**
- **2 tsp powdered veg stock or 1 vegetable stock cube**
- **a handful of basil leaves, sliced into strips**

1. Heat 1 tbsp of olive oil in a large frying pan, add the mushrooms, season with salt and pepper and fry for about 10 minutes until they start to brown and crisp around the edges. Set them aside.
2. Meanwhile, boil water in a medium size saucepan and cook the spaghetti according to the pack instructions, making sure you reserve a mugful of the starchy pasta water for later.
3. Add a few sprays of olive oil to the same frying pan that you cooked the mushrooms in and fry the onions for about 5-10 minutes until they start to soften, add the garlic and cook for a further minute, then add the tomatoes and cook for 2-3 minutes more.
4. Tip the mushrooms back into the pan and add the lentils, stock and about 200ml of the pasta water. Give everything a good stir and leave to simmer for 5 minutes to allow the ragù mixture to reduce, thicken and become saucy.
5. Heap the pasta into bowls and serve the ragù on top with the strips of basil.

Recipe taken from *The 30g Plan* by Emma Bardwell, published by Vermilion, £16.99.



PER SERVING:
Calories: **508**, Fat **13g**, Saturates **1.7g**, Carbohydrate **59.1g**, Sugars **10.4g**, Fibre **12g**, Protein **30g**, Salt **2.5g**

Habit tracker

☐ **Today I...** Prioritised low-cost protein options

Do this... **4-5 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Protein smoothie (protein powder, banana, almond milk, peanut butter, Greek yoghurt)

Lunch

Bean and lentil salad with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and avocado

Dinner

Grilled prawns skewers, couscous, and roasted courgette and peppers

DAY 10

Today focus on swapping sauces

Greek yoghurt comes to the rescue once again, this time as a healthier, higher protein substitute

If you use mayonnaise, sour cream or salad cream to add richness and moisture to meals, consider a simple, protein-boost swap: Greek yoghurt. Not only is it naturally high in protein, but it also brings the same creamy texture and tang – without the added fat and calories of traditional condiments.

Just 2 tbsp of full-fat mayo contain about 200 calories and almost no protein. The same amount of Greek yoghurt has 10-12g protein and half the calories. It's a smart switch with no loss of flavour.

Greek yoghurt is also extremely versatile. It pairs well with sweet and savoury dishes and can be used in everything from sandwiches to sauces, dips, dressings and even baking.

Here's how to do it...

Start by swapping mayonnaise in sandwiches and wraps. Mix Greek yoghurt with lemon juice, a pinch of salt, mustard or fresh herbs to mimic the creamy tang of mayo-based dressings. It works just as well in tuna salad, egg mayo, or chicken salad, offering better texture and more staying power.

Make a protein-rich dip or dressing by combining Greek yoghurt with tahini, garlic, chopped herbs or spices. It's perfect for drizzling over roast vegetables or using as a dip for a meze platter. You can also make your own tzatziki by adding cucumber and mint.

Use Greek yoghurt as a creamy base for pasta salads or mix into potato salad instead of cream or sour cream. Stir into curries or soups for a rich finish, or even as a topping for baked sweet potatoes.

When shopping, choose plain, unsweetened Greek yoghurt. Aim for at least 10g of protein per 100g. If you're dairy-free, some coconut or almond yoghurts fortified with pea or soy protein are a great alternative, just check the label.

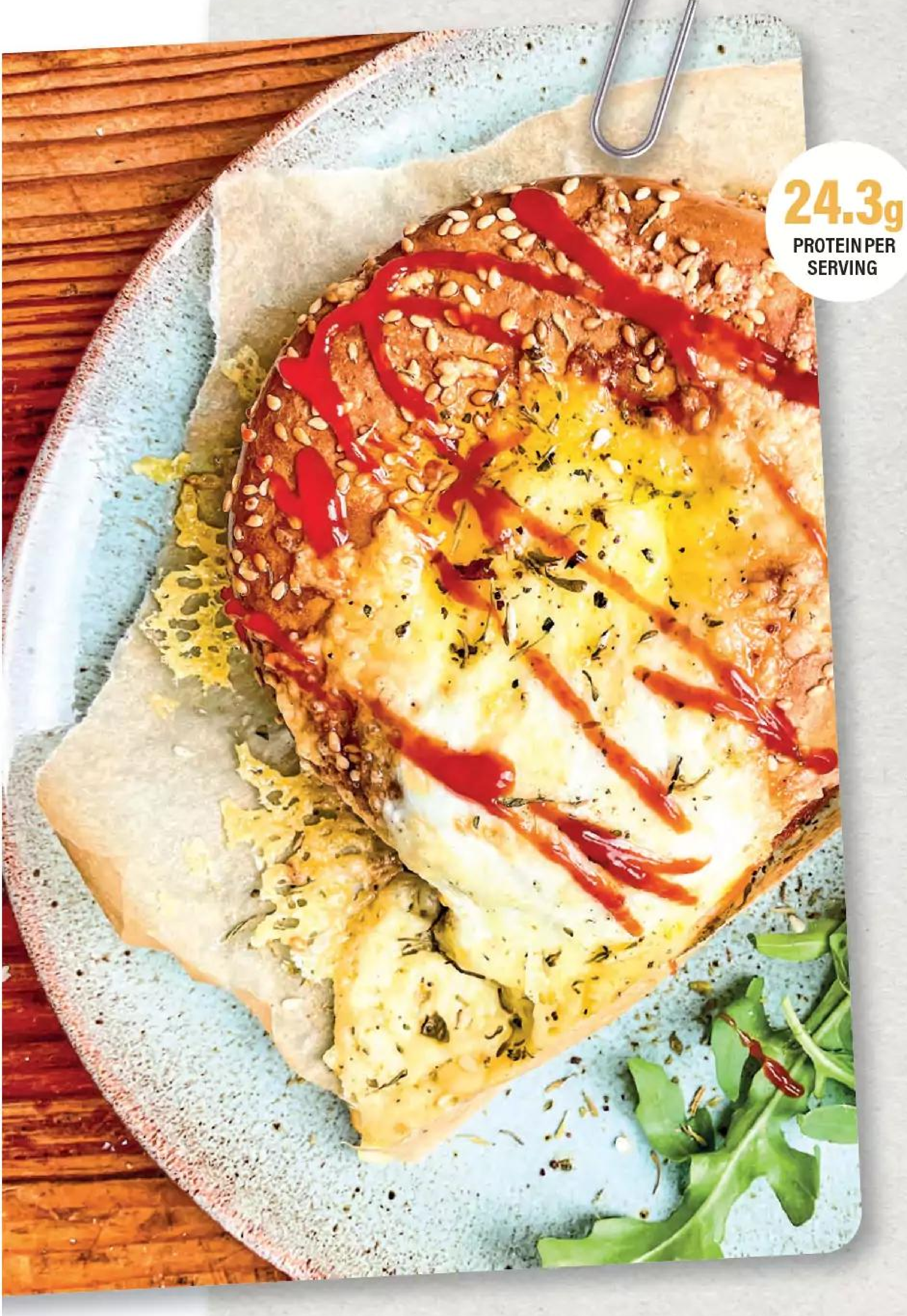
Make it easy

Use Greek yoghurt instead of mayo or cream in sandwiches, dressings, or dips – it's creamy, satisfying and high in protein.

How Greek yoghurt helps reach your protein goal

Just how much extra protein are you getting by making the switch?

Instead of...	Try this!
Chicken or tuna salad with mayo	Switching out 1 tbsp of mayonnaise for 2 tbsp Greek yoghurt in your salad adds a whopping 10g of protein.
Creamy tomato sauce	Adding 3 tbsp of Greek yoghurt instead of 2 tbsp cream to your favourite pasta sauce will give you a 15g protein boost.
Classic potato salad	Instead of 2 spoons of mayo, try 2 of Greek yoghurt for an extra 10g of protein, as well as a tangy twist.
Herby sour cream dips	If you love a sour cream dip or a tzatziki, 2 tbsp of Greek yoghurt work wonders as a base for 10g of bonus protein.



24.3g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Cheesy egg-in-a-hole bagel

Try Greek yoghurt as a base spread for this quick and filling lunch

Serves **2** | Prep **2 mins** | Cook **10 mins**

butter or spread of your choice

4 bagel halves

2 large free-range eggs

60g (½ cup) shredded Cheddar or mozzarella

2 tbsp sun-dried tomato purée (paste)

2 tbsp houmous, plus extra to spread

salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 tbsp chopped fresh herbs

salad leaves, to serve

1. Spread a layer of your spread of choice on the upsides of the bagel halves, then add a layer of houmous. Place the top back on.
2. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Alternatively, preheat an air fryer to 190°C/370°F and line the basket with baking paper (make sure the sides are covered). Mix together the purée and 2 tbsp houmous.
3. Place the bagels on a baking tray or in the air fryer basket, crack an egg into each bagel hole, then sprinkle the cheese evenly around the edges, avoiding the egg in the centre.
4. Cook for 10-12 minutes in the oven, 8-9 minutes in the air fryer, or until the egg is cooked to your desired level and the cheese is melted and bubbly. Top with herbs/salad of choice and drizzle over the tomato and houmous sauce.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **519**, Fat **21.3g**, Saturates **8.1g**, Carbohydrate **52.3g**, Sugars **7g**, Fibre **3.8g**, Protein **24.3g**, Salt **1.8g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Swapped mayo for Greek yoghurt

Do this... **4-5 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Protein pancakes with Greek yoghurt and berries

Lunch

Falafel with quinoa, salad, and tahini-yoghurt dressing

Dinner

Chicken and mushroom pasta bake with chickpea pasta and mozzarella

DAY 11

Today focus on chickpea/ lentil pasta

Swapping wheat pasta for lentil or chickpea pasta fills you up and boosts more protein

If pasta is one of your weekly staples, you're not alone. It's convenient, comforting and endlessly customisable – but traditional wheat pasta is relatively low in protein, offering just 6-8g per 75g cooked serving, and is mostly refined carbohydrate. That means it can spike blood sugar and leave you hungry again not long after eating.

By swapping regular pasta for a legume-based version like chickpea, lentil, or black bean, you can significantly increase the protein and fibre content of a meal, without sacrificing convenience or satisfaction. Most chickpea or lentil pastas provide 18-22g of protein per 75g serving, making them a brilliant option if you're trying to build more protein into your day.

These pastas have a lower glycaemic index, supporting more stable blood sugar, better energy levels and longer-lasting fullness. They're gluten-free, which is helpful if you're coeliac or gluten-sensitive.

Here's how to do it...

Find chickpea, lentil, or bean-based pasta in the health food aisle or gluten-free section of supermarkets. Look for options with only one or two ingredients (such as 100 per cent lentil flour or chickpeas) and confirm the protein content on the label.

Cook them just like regular pasta – boil, rinse and serve with your favourite toppings. Check the packet for cooking times though as some lentil pastas in particular cook quicker than regular pasta, so you don't want to overcook it.

They work well with all kinds of sauces, from classic tomato and veggie-based sauces to pesto, garlic and olive oil, or even creamy avocado sauces. Add extra protein with tuna, tofu, roasted chickpeas, grilled chicken, or a soft-boiled egg on top.

Leftovers make excellent lunchbox options or pasta salads – just add roasted veg and a drizzle of olive oil or tahini dressing for a protein-rich, balanced meal.

Make it easy

If the texture feels firmer or grainier than you're used to, try mixing half chickpea pasta with half wheat pasta to ease into it. Many people find they prefer it after a couple of tries, especially when well-seasoned.

4 *alternatives* to white pasta with more protein

Next time a pasta dish is on the menu, try making the switch to one of these...

The pasta	What it's best for
Lentil pasta (21-25g of protein per dry 100g)	Lentil pasta is high in fibre and is also gluten-free. Plus, it holds sauce really well and provides a deeper, more earthy flavour.
Chickpea pasta (20g of protein per dry 100g)	This mild, nutty pasta is rich in iron and tastes slightly sweet. It works particularly well with creamy sauces.
Wholewheat pasta (13g of protein per dry 100g)	This is a simple upgrade that contains more protein, fibre and nutrients than white pasta. It's heartier, and pairs well with rich tomato sauces.
Soybean pasta (40-45g of protein per dry 100g)	Soybean pasta packs a huge protein punch, and is great in Asian-inspired dishes. It's usually available in health shops or large supermarkets.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Chicken breast with coconut and stem ginger sauce

Soybean noodles pair perfectly with this rich, warming dish

By Opies (*bennettopie.com*)

Serves **2** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **25 mins**

33g PROTEIN PER SERVING

2 chicken breasts
2 Opies Stem Ginger Balls, finely chopped
3 Opies Lemon Slices, finely chopped
1 tbsp honey
200ml (scant 1 cup) coconut milk
a pinch of chilli flakes
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp oil
20g (1⅓ tbsp) butter
soybean noodles, to serve

To garnish
sesame oil
coriander (cilantro), finely chopped
spring onion (scallion), finely chopped
toasted sesame seeds

1. For the chicken, in a pan, heat 1 tbsp oil with the butter over medium heat. Pan-fry the chicken breasts until golden brown on both sides. Remove from the pan and set aside.
2. For the sauce, in the same pan, add the finely chopped stem ginger, lemon slices, and a pinch of chilli flakes. Fry for a couple of minutes until fragrant.
3. Pour in the coconut milk, honey, and soy sauce. Stir well and bring the mixture to a simmer.
4. Add the chicken breasts back into the pan. Let the sauce simmer until the chicken is fully cooked and the flavours have combined together.
5. Boil the noodles according to packet instructions. Drain and toss with a little sesame oil, finely chopped coriander, spring onion, and toasted sesame seeds.
6. Plate the chicken with sauce over the noodles and enjoy.

PER SERVING:
Calories: **735**, Fat **41g**, Saturates **21g**, Carbohydrate **30g**, Sugars **14g**, Fibre **8g**, Protein **33g**, Salt **2.2g**

Habit tracker

✓ **Today I...** Swapped wheat for lentil/chickpea pasta

Do this... **EVERY WEEK**

How I feel today Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast
Protein pancakes with Greek yoghurt and berries

Lunch
High-protein wrap with grilled chicken, houmous and salad

Dinner
Tempeh peanut stir-fry with broccoli, peppers and noodles

DAY 12

Today focus on adding nuts to meals or snacks

Nuts are celebrated for their healthy fats, but they're also a reliable source of protein

A small handful of nuts (about 30g) provides 5-7g of protein, along with fibre, magnesium, vitamin E, and heart-healthy monounsaturated fats. They're also incredibly portable, require no prep, and can slot into your day with ease.

While nuts alone might not provide enough protein for a full meal, they're an excellent way to boost total daily intake, especially when paired with other high-protein foods. Because they help with satiety, they can be a powerful ally in managing appetite and supporting stable blood sugar levels throughout the day.

Here's how to do it...

Keep a stash of mixed nuts like almonds, walnuts, pistachios or cashews in a small jar or resealable pouch in your kitchen, desk drawer, car or bag. Add them to Greek yoghurt, porridge, or overnight oats in the morning. Toss them onto salads for extra crunch, sprinkle over roasted veg, or use them as a topping for smoothie bowls.

Try blitzing nuts into sauces – cashews make a creamy vegan base, and almonds work brilliantly in pesto. Toasted nuts can elevate simple dishes like stir-fries, couscous, or even scrambled eggs.

Nut butters are another easy option – 1 tbsp of peanut or almond butter delivers about 4g of protein. Spread it on oatcakes, banana or apple slices, or stir into protein shakes, overnight oats or homemade energy bites.

If portion control is a concern (as nuts are calorie-dense), pre-portion a small handful into containers or snack bags to avoid binge eating. Also, go for unsalted, unflavoured versions where possible.

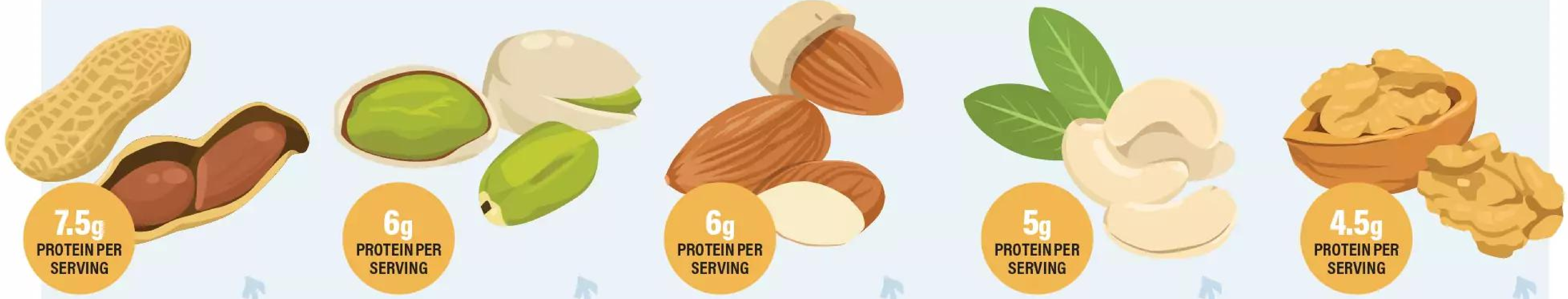
Allergens? Try sunflower, sesame or pumpkin seeds instead – they offer a similar nutrient profile and are easy to use.

Make it easy

Snack on a handful of nuts or add them to meals for extra protein, crunch, and healthy fats – no prep needed.

How much protein can you find in nuts?

Here's how much protein you'll find in these easily-available nuts



Nut	Protein per serving	Serving
Peanuts	7.5g	**30g**
Pistachios	6g	**30g**
Almonds	6g	**30g**
Cashews	5g	**30g**
Walnuts	4.5g	**30g**

RECIPE OF THE DAY

One pan 'English breakfast' beans

Cashews form the base of this plant-based scramble sauce

By Sophie Waplington

Serves **3** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **20 mins**

30g PROTEIN PER SERVING

SOPH'S PLANT KITCHEN

Recipe taken from *Soph's Plant Kitchen* by Sophie Waplington, published by Yellow Kite in hardback, £25.

- **1 white onion, sliced**
- **1 leek, white and light green parts sliced into half-moons**
- **4 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus more**
- **250g (2½ cups) chestnut mushrooms, finely chopped**
- **5 garlic cloves, minced**
- **2 tsp smoked paprika**
- **1 tsp ground cumin**
- **1 tsp ground coriander**
- **700g (4 cups) tinned white beans, plus juices (if the juice is not salted, add ½ veg stock cube, crumbled)**
- **3-4 medium tomatoes, sliced**

For the scramble sauce

- **35g (¼ cup) cashews or sunflower seeds**
- **280g (1½ cups) silken tofu**
- **20g (½ cup) nutritional yeast**
- **1 garlic clove or 1 tsp powder**
- **1 tsp smoked paprika**
- **1 tbsp sweet white miso**
- **1 tbsp lemon juice**
- **1 tsp Dijon mustard**

To serve

- **freshly chopped chives**
- **sourdough toast**

1 Soak the cashews in boiling water for 10 minutes. Drain, set aside.

2 In an ovenproof casserole dish on medium heat, fry the onion and leeks in plenty of olive oil with a pinch of salt and lots of black pepper for 8 minutes until caramelising. Add the mushrooms, more salt, and fry until the water has evaporated. Add the garlic and spices, and more oil if needed. Fry for 2 minutes more.

3 Add the beans and their juices, or 100ml (scant ½ cup) hot water with the stock cube dissolved in it. Stir to combine and season to taste.

4 In a small blender cup, blend all the ingredients for the sauce. Add a little water if needed to loosen slightly so it's a pourable consistency. Add to the pan. Stir well and season to taste, adding more lemon juice if desired.

5 Heat the grill to its top setting, then arrange the tomatoes on top of the dish, drizzle with olive oil and add a little salt. Transfer to the top rack and grill for 6-10 minutes, or until the tomatoes start to catch a small char.

6 Top with fresh chives and serve with sourdough toast.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **625**, Fat **31g**, Saturates **4.3g**, Carbohydrate **52g**, Sugars **8.5g**, Fibre **12g**, Protein **30g**, Salt **1.7g**

Habit tracker

✓ **Today I...** Added nuts to my meal plan

Do this... **4-5 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Protein smoothie (protein powder, banana, almond milk, peanut butter, Greek yoghurt)

Lunch

Bean and lentil salad with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and avocado

Dinner

Salmon and edamame rice bowl with shredded carrot, cucumber and soy-lime dressing

DAY 13

Today focus on roasted chickpeas

If crisps are your go-to snack, try swapping them for roasted chickpeas or edamame

Crisps are a common snack-time go-to, but they're high in refined oils, salt, and offer little more than a temporary crunch fix. If you're craving something savoury and satisfying, there are smarter swaps that will deliver not just taste, but protein, fibre and long-lasting energy.

Roasted chickpeas and edamame beans are high-protein alternatives that mimic the crunch of crisps, but bring more to the table nutritionally. A typical 100g serving offers around 10-15g of protein, making them a brilliant option for snacks, lunchboxes, or post-workout recovery.

Here's how to do it...

You'll find pre-packed roasted chickpeas or edamame snacks in supermarkets or health food shops. Look for ones with simple ingredients and minimal added sugar or oil. Or make your own at home.

For the chickpeas: rinse and drain a tin, pat them dry, then toss with olive oil, salt, garlic powder, paprika or cumin. Roast at 200°C/Gas Mark 6 for 25-30 minutes, shaking the tray halfway through. Let them cool to crisp up fully. For edamame: use frozen shelled edamame beans. Steam or microwave for a few minutes, then season with sea salt, chilli flakes, tamari, or nutritional yeast. You can also roast them like chickpeas for extra crunch.

Both options store well in airtight containers and are brilliant for meal prep. Add them to salads, soups, grain bowls or wraps for extra protein and texture.

To mix things up, try flavoured versions – smoky paprika chickpeas, wasabi edamame, or cinnamon-spiced chickpeas for a sweet-savoury twist. These swaps don't just increase protein, they also help retrain snack habits in a way that supports energy, metabolism and gut health.

Make it easy

Swap crisps for roasted chickpeas or edamame – crunchy, satisfying, and protein-rich. Batch cook or buy ready-made for convenience.

4 *creative ways* to pack snacks with protein

These delicious, protein-rich snacks will have you ditching the crisps in no time

Try this	The benefits
Roasted chickpeas	Crunchy like crisps, roasted chickpeas scratch that itch, but with about 7g of protein per 40g serving. Switch things up by adding your favourite spices like smoked paprika, chilli or garlic powder.
Edamame	These delicious little beans are packed with 8-11g of protein per 75g serving. If you love salty snacks, they're fantastic tossed in some chilli salt.
Cottage cheese rice cakes	If you're after something a bit heartier, spread some cottage cheese on a rice cake and add tomatoes and cracked black pepper for a filling, savoury snack of 17-20g of protein per 100g.
Beef or turkey jerky	Meat jerky is higher in protein than most supermarket snacks, with 9-12g per serving. Look out for brands that are low in sodium, with minimal additives.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

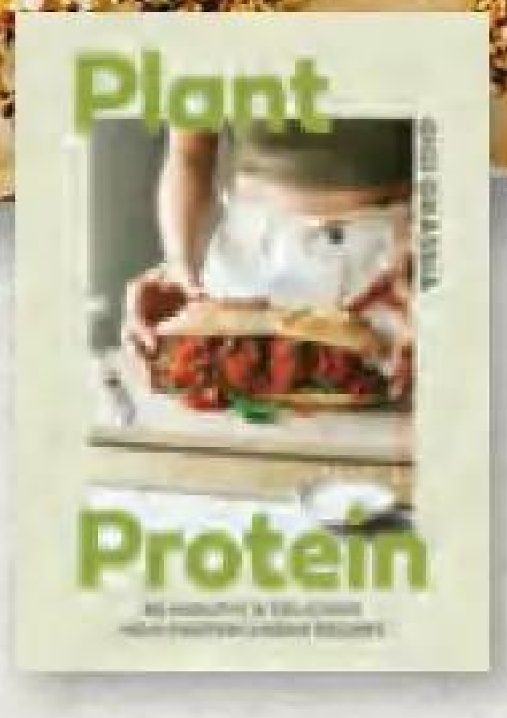
Polenta chips with bean and garlic dip

This high-protein snack is perfect to tide you over between meals

By Gigi Grassia

Serves **4** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **80 mins**

20.4g
PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *Plant Protein* by Gigi Grassia, published by Greenfinch, £22.

For the chips

- 600ml (2½ cups) vegetable stock (or water)
- 30g (¾ cup) nutritional yeast
- 1 tsp onion granules
- 170g (scant 1¼ cups) instant polenta
- 30g (½ cup) panko breadcrumbs
- 40g (scant ¼ cup) tricolour quinoa
- 15g (2 tbsp) plant-based Parmesan-style cheese
- 2 tsp dried oregano
- 2 tsp dried rosemary
- 3 tbsp olive oil, plus extra to grease

For the dip

- 1 bulb of garlic
- 2 tbsp olive oil, plus extra to drizzle
- 2 x 400g tins (3⅓ cups) of cannellini beans, drained
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 4 tbsp tahini
- chopped chives, to serve

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6 and grease a 20x20cm (8x8in) baking dish.
2. Slice the top off the garlic bulb to expose the cloves, then drizzle with a little olive oil, wrap it in foil and roast in the oven for 30-40 minutes. Remove the garlic and set aside.
3. For the chips, pour the stock into a pan and boil, then reduce the heat to medium and add the yeast, onion granules and a pinch of salt and pepper. Slowly pour in the polenta, stirring until the mixture thickens (it happens almost instantly). Remove from the heat and pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish. Smooth the surface with a spatula and allow to cool completely.
4. When ready to cook, preheat the oven as before and line two baking trays with baking parchment.
5. Combine the breadcrumbs, quinoa, cheese, oregano, rosemary and olive oil in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. Mix well.
6. Flip the baking dish and carefully remove the polenta. Cut into rectangles, about 8cm (3in) long, then gently coat the chips with the quinoa and breadcrumbs. Put the chips on the prepared trays and bake for 40 minutes, flipping halfway through.
7. While the chips bake, make the dip. In a processor, combine the beans, roasted garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, tahini and some salt and pepper. Blend until smooth and creamy. Transfer the dip to a bowl and garnish with chives. Serve with the chips.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **526**, Fat **20.7g**, Saturates **2.7g**, Carbohydrate **64g**, Sugars **2.5g**, Fibre **8.1g**, Protein **20.4g**, Salt **2.2g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Tried snacking on roasted chickpeas

Do this... **3-4 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today
Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

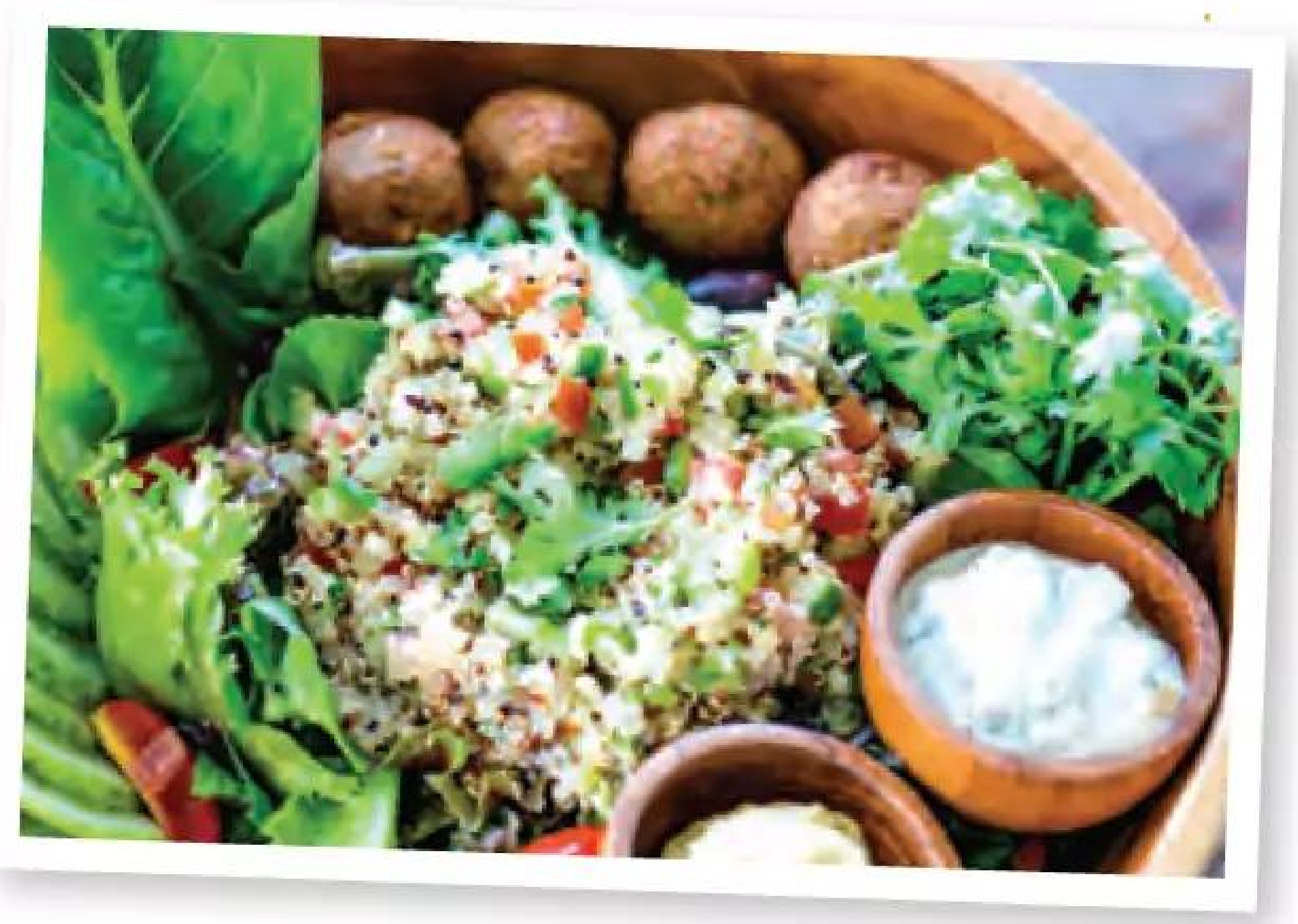
Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast
Protein smoothie (protein powder, banana, almond milk, peanut butter, Greek yoghurt)

Lunch
Falafel with quinoa, salad, and tahini-yoghurt dressing

Dinner
Lentil and halloumi traybake with roast veg and pumpkin seeds



DAY 14

Today focus on using beans and pulses

If in doubt, add beans and pulses to every single meal that you possibly can!

Make it easy

Toss beans or lentils into soups, salads or casseroles. They're cheap, filling and add 8-10g of protein per half cup.

Beans and lentils are some of the most cost-effective and nutrient-dense ways to boost your protein intake, especially if you're trying to rely less on meat or increase your intake across the day. A half cup of cooked beans or lentils has 7-10g of protein, plus fibre, iron, B vitamins and slow-digesting carbohydrates.

They're also incredibly versatile and can be used in everything from soups and stews to snacks and even baking. The key is to stop seeing them as a side and start seeing them as a foundation.

Here's how to do it...

Stock up on tinned beans such as black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, cannellini beans and lentils. They require no prep and can go straight into salads, soups, curries, grain bowls, wraps or stir-fries.

For example, add half a tin of black beans to a sweet potato bowl along with some avocado and spinach. Stir lentils into a bolognese sauce. Add chickpeas to a veggie stir-fry. Or even mash some cannellini beans with garlic and lemon as a toast topper or side dip.

Make a big batch of lentil dhal, a three-bean chilli or bean stew and freeze portions for quick, protein-rich lunches and dinners. These types of meals can deliver 15-20g of protein in one go, especially when they are paired with a serving of quinoa.

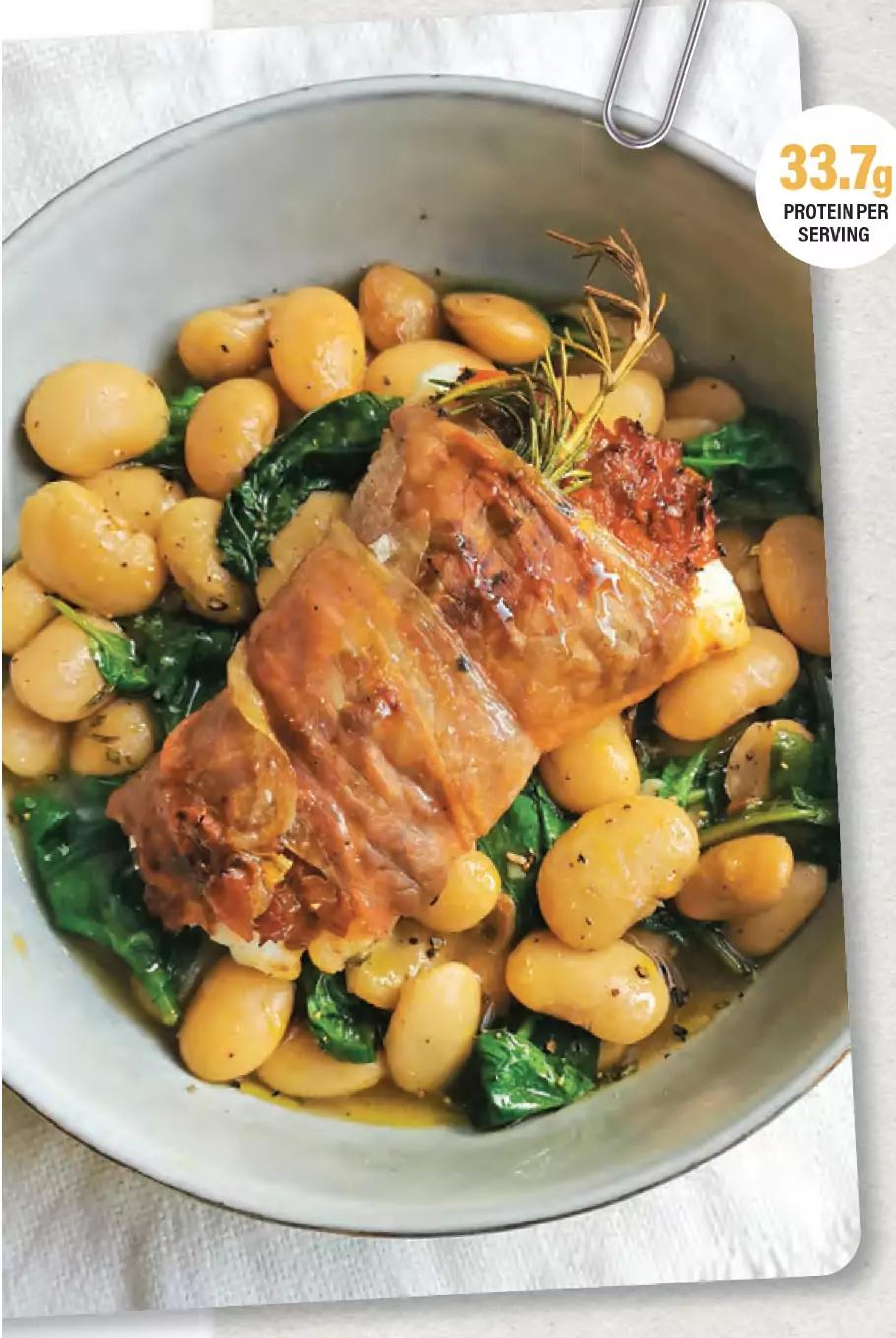
You can also blend beans into snacks, such as houmous, black bean dip, or chickpea brownies for a protein-rich twist on a treat. They can even be added to falafels or veggie patties for quick, satisfying meals.

If you are using dried beans, soak and cook them in bulk, then freeze in portions for convenience.

Easy family meals you can boost with beans

These classic dinners can give you even more protein with a bonus bean or two

On the menu	Add this...
Shepherd's pie	Replace half the mince with lentils for extra fibre. You'll barely notice the difference, and it'll be cheaper, too.
Bangers and mash	Add a side of baked beans to your classic bangers and mash. To avoid added sugar, look for low-sugar options or make your own. Add some mustard for an extra punch.
Fish and chips	Whether you get a takeaway or make your own, mushy peas are a must-have. Blend some chickpeas with peas, mint, lemon and a drizzle of olive oil as a high-protein alternative.
Homemade curry	Chickpeas or split red lentils make an easy, tasty addition to any homemade curry. You could even opt for a dhal if you want to go all-in on the lentils.



33.7g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Prosciutto-wrapped cod with butter beans

Butter beans make a protein-rich base for baked cod

By Fern Green

Serves **2** | Prep **5 mins** | Cook **20 mins**

- **2 x 150g cod fillets, or other white fish fillet**
- **4 slices of prosciutto**
- **½ a lemon**
- **400g tin (1⅔ cups) of white beans, drained**
- **4 sprigs of rosemary**
- **2 garlic cloves**
- **40g (⅔ cup) sun-dried tomatoes**
- **½ tbsp red wine vinegar**
- **125g (4 cups) baby spinach**
- **olive oil**

1 Slice the garlic and pick off the rosemary. Finely chop. Add 1 tbsp oil to the air fryer rack or to a baking tray. Roast the garlic and rosemary in the oven (200°C/ Gas Mark 6) or air fryer (180°C/360°F) for 4 minutes until the garlic is lightly golden. Keep an eye on it so it doesn't burn.

2 Chop the tomatoes and mash with the back of a fork. Spread on top of each fillet, then wrap each one in prosciutto – tuck a rosemary sprig in each.

3 Add the beans to the garlic and rosemary, half the juice from the bean tin and the wine vinegar to the baking tray. Season. Lay the cod on top and bake for 12-15 minutes, or air fry for 8 minutes, until the prosciutto is crispy and the fish is cooked through.

4 Remove the fish, then add the spinach. Stir through the beans and spoon half onto each plate. Lay the fish on top and drizzle with a little olive oil.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **385**, Fat **15g**, Saturates **3g**, Carbohydrate **18g**, Sugars **3g**, Fibre **6g**, Protein **33.7g**, Salt **2.3g**

Habit tracker

✓ **Today I...** Added beans and pulses to my recipes

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

End of week reflection

The habit I enjoyed most this week was...

My favourite meal this week was...

The habit I think benefited me most was...

My biggest takeaway from this week is...

The habit I struggled with most was...

My new favourite ingredient is...

Overall this week my energy has been...

Average protein amount per day:

Amount of water I drank each day...

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Protein pancakes with Greek yoghurt and berries

Lunch

High-protein wrap with grilled chicken, houmous and salad

Dinner

Salmon fillet, baby potatoes and green beans with cottage cheese

COTTAGE CHEESE

DAY 15

Today focus on cottage cheese

Cottage cheese may have dipped in popularity, but it's an underrated, versatile protein source

Cottage cheese isn't the flashiest item in the fridge, but it's quietly making a comeback, and for good reason. It's one of the most convenient, high-protein dairy options available, with between 11-14g of protein per 100g serving, with very little prep required. It's also low in fat (if desired), rich in calcium, B vitamins, and phosphorus, and, crucially, a complete protein, meaning it contains all nine essential amino acids your body needs.

Despite its reputation as old-school or bland, cottage cheese is incredibly versatile. Whether you prefer savoury or sweet meals, it can slot into your day with minimal effort and maximum benefit.

Here's how to do it...

Start with breakfast or snacks. Pair cottage cheese with sliced banana, berries or apple, and top with cinnamon or a drizzle of nut butter. Want savoury? Mix with chopped tomatoes, avocado, cucumber or fresh herbs, then add a glug of olive oil, lemon juice and sea salt.

Cottage cheese works well as a toast topper, or stirred into scrambled eggs or omelettes for extra volume and creaminess. Use it as a spread for crackers or oatcakes, or stuff into sweet potatoes or jacket potatoes for a speedy lunch.

It also blends well into smoothies and can be used in baking for high-protein muffins, pancakes, or even healthier cheesecakes. Mix with herbs, garlic and lemon for a creamy dip or pasta sauce.

Choose plain, unsweetened varieties with at least 10g protein per 100g – avoid flavoured options containing added sugar. For those who are lactose-intolerant, look for lactose-free versions, which are now widely available.

Once you find your preferred texture (chunky vs smooth), you'll find yourself reaching for this protein hero more often.

Make it easy

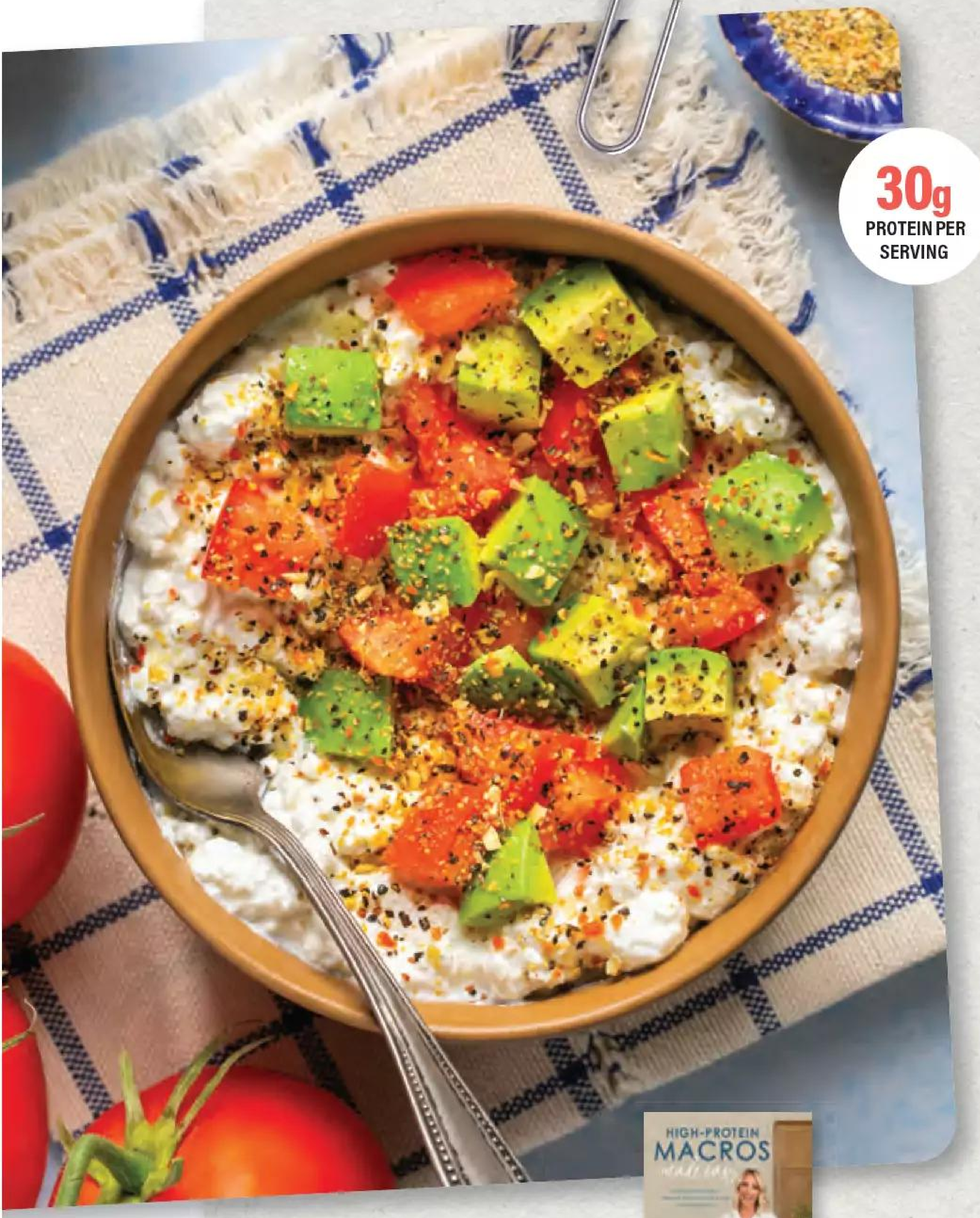
COTTAGE CHEESE

Keep cottage cheese in the fridge for easy breakfasts, snacks or lunchbox fillers. Try adding it to omelettes to boost the protein content, and it even makes some tasty desserts. Start experimenting!

4 *simple ways* to squeeze in the cheese

Cottage cheese got you stumped? Here's how to add it into your diet

The base	How to add it
Scrambled eggs	Fold a couple of spoonfuls of cottage cheese into your eggs before cooking. It makes them super creamy without changing the flavour too much.
Jacket potato	Add cottage cheese with mixed herbs and cracked black pepper to your usual jacket potato toppings – it's great with beans or mixed with tuna.
Pesto pasta	Blend up some cottage cheese with your pesto for a lighter, creamier flavour, sneaking in that extra protein in the process.
Sandwiches	Spread a layer of cottage cheese onto your sandwich bread instead of mayo. It's particularly tasty with avocado and smoked salmon, or with sliced tomatoes.



30g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Lemon pepper cottage cheese bowls

Keep it simple with this well-seasoned cottage cheese bowl topped with your favourite veg

By Danielle Lima

Serves **1** | Prep **5 mins** | Cook **none**

220g (1 cup) low-fat cottage cheese

1 small vine ripe tomato, chopped

½ an avocado

¾ tsp lemon pepper seasoning

Optional additions

bacon, cooked and chopped

roasted red bell peppers

sweet heat jalapeños

1 Add the cottage cheese to a bowl and top with the tomato, avocado and lemon pepper. Add bacon, roasted red peppers and jalapeños, if desired. Mix them all together and enjoy.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **385**, Fat **22g**, Saturates **6g**, Carbohydrate **12g**, Sugars **6g**, Fibre **4g**, Protein **30g**, Salt **1.9g**

HIGH-PROTEIN
MACROS
made easy
DANIELLE LIMA

Recipe taken from *High-Protein Macros Made Easy* by Danielle Lima, photography by Sierra Ashleigh Photography, published by Page Street Publishing, £19.99.

Habit tracker

✓ **Today I...** Added cottage cheese to a meal

Do this... **3-4 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

3-egg omelette, mushrooms, tomatoes and low-fat cheese

Lunch

Smoked salmon and boiled egg salad with baby potatoes and rocket

Dinner

Chickpea pasta with veggie-loaded tomato sauce and grated cheese

DAY 16

Today focus on choosing lean proteins

Choosing lean sources lets you increase your protein without too much saturated fat

To make protein intake easier and more consistent, it helps to structure meals around a solid protein anchor. Rather than adding it as an afterthought, start with protein as the centrepiece, and build the rest of the meal – veggies, carbs, fats – around that. This habit makes it easier to hit your daily target, improves satiety and supports muscle maintenance and metabolism.

Lean proteins are especially useful: they're high in protein, lower in fat and versatile enough for a wide variety of meals. Things like bacon, sausages and beef mince can be higher in protein, but they are higher in saturated fat, so should only be consumed once or twice a week.

Here's how to do it...

Think about lunch and dinner as starting with one question: what's the protein? This might be grilled chicken, turkey mince, white fish, prawns, tofu, tempeh or eggs. From there, add your preferred vegetables, whole grains or starchy carbs like brown rice, sweet potato or quinoa.

Lean poultry like chicken or turkey breast contains about 30g of protein per 100g cooked weight, and it's quick to cook in batches. Fish like cod, haddock or halibut are lighter options with about 20-25g of protein per portion and are perfect if you prefer a lower-fat choice.

For plant-based meals, tofu, tempeh and seitan are excellent options – high in protein and easy to flavour with spices, tamari or marinades.

Prepare protein bases in bulk. Grill a tray of chicken breasts, roast tofu or tempeh, or boil a batch of eggs. Store in the fridge for use throughout the week in wraps, salads, grain bowls or stir-fries.

Once it becomes a habit, you'll stop relying on last-minute fillers and eat a more balanced, protein-forward way.

Make it easy

If you just can't bear to give up your sausages, try chicken sausages instead. Chicken is a lean protein source, so while the sausages are still processed, they tend to have a lower saturated fat content.

4 *great sources* of lean protein

Add these ingredients to your shopping list and you'll have plenty of lean protein to hand

The protein source	How to serve it
Chicken breast	Chicken contains plenty of protein and is low in fat. Grill it, roast it or shred it into wraps, salads and stir-fries.
Turkey mince	Look out for 5 per cent fat or lower. This mince is a super simple swap for your Bolognese sauce, chilli or homemade burgers – and it's often cheaper, too.
Firm tofu	Firm tofu is a great lean protein source that soaks up marinades like a sponge. Bake it, grill it or stir-fry it with veggies.
Cottage cheese	Cottage cheese isn't just a great source of protein – it's lean, too. Bulk out your sauces, mix into eggs or spread on toast for creaminess.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

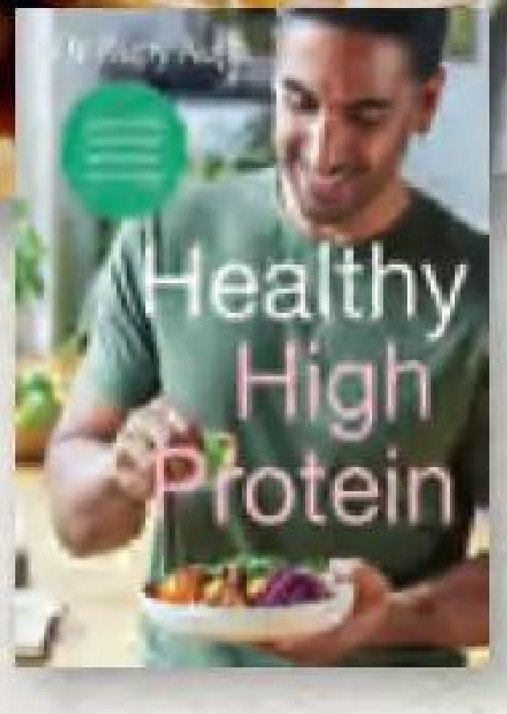
Noodle broth with turkey

Turkey mince is a lean source of protein in this spicy broth

By Dr Rupy Aujla

Serves **2** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **20 mins**

43.7g PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *Healthy High Protein* by Dr Rupy Aujla, photography by Andrew Burton, published by Ebury Press, £22.

2 tbsp olive oil

200g lean turkey or chicken mince, or finely chopped boneless thigh or breast

150g (¾ cup) shiitake mushrooms, torn into pieces

100g (⅔ cup) spring onions (scallions), sliced diagonally, plus extra to serve

150g (1 cup) mangetout, sliced diagonally

100g (1 cup) ready-to-eat konjac (shirataki), rice vermicelli or udon noodles

For the broth

3 tbsp tahini

2 tbsp soy sauce

1 tbsp gochujang

300ml (1¼ cups) just-boiled water

To serve

1 lime, cut into wedges

10g (1 tbsp) black sesame seeds

2 tsp chilli oil

1 For the broth, add the tahini, soy sauce and the gochujang to a large saucepan over a low heat and gradually whisk in the just-boiled water. Cook gently until heated through, and smooth and creamy. Season to taste.

2 Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the mince or finely chopped meat and cook for 6-8 minutes, breaking it down into small pieces with a spatula, until browned in places and starting to crisp, then scoop it out with a slotted spoon into a bowl and set aside.

3 To the same pan, add the remaining oil and the mushrooms and cook over a medium-high heat, stirring often, for 3 minutes until softened and starting to turn golden. Add the spring onions and mangetout and cook for another 2-3 minutes until just tender. Return the meat to the pan and toss through the vegetables with the remaining soy sauce and heat through briefly.

4 Add the noodles to the pan with the creamy tahini broth, stir to combine with the liquid, then heat through briefly over a low-medium heat. Transfer the hot noodle broth to serving bowls. Spoon the mince and vegetable mixture on top and serve with lime wedges for squeezing over, the extra spring onions, sesame seeds and a drizzle of chilli oil.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **610**, Fat **38g**, Saturates **6g**, Carbohydrate **30g**, Sugars **5g**, Fibre **5g**, Protein **43.7g**, Salt **2.2g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Chose lean protein ingredients

Do this... **4-5 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

3-egg omelette with mushrooms, tomatoes and low-fat cheese

Lunch

Lentil and egg power bowl with sweet potato and tahini drizzle

Dinner

Tofu stir-fry with veg, edamame and soy sauce over brown rice

DAY 17

Today focus on batch cooking

Fail to plan and you plan to fail. Batch cooking stops you running out of time or inspiration

Eating more protein is much easier when it's already cooked and ready to go. That's why batch cooking is one of the most practical ways to stay consistent with high-protein eating. It helps prevent last-minute takeaways or skipping meals, and makes it far more likely you'll hit your daily intake, even on busy days.

The idea is simple: cook once, eat multiple times. A few hours of prep at the start of the week saves time, money and decision fatigue later on.

Here's how to do it...

Choose one or two protein-rich meals to make in large batches. Options include:

- Turkey or chicken meatballs (serve with salad, pasta or rice)
- Lentil or chickpea curry
- Black bean stew
- Grilled tofu or tempeh
- Egg muffins for grab-and-go breakfasts
- Overnight oats with protein powder and chia seeds

Double or triple the recipe, then portion it out into containers. Keep some in the fridge and freeze the rest for fast meals when time is tight. Batch-cooked proteins like grilled chicken, roasted salmon or tofu can be used in multiple ways throughout the week – add to wraps, salads, bowls or stir-fries.

You can also prep protein snacks like hard-boiled eggs, protein pancakes, cottage cheese pots, or homemade trail mix with nuts and seeds.

Keep a few staple ingredients on hand – tinned beans, frozen fish, eggs, oats, Greek yoghurt – and rotate batch meals weekly to avoid boredom. If variety is an issue, cook base proteins (like grilled chicken) and change up the sauces or spices. This approach doesn't just help you hit your protein goals – it makes your whole week feel easier.

Make it easy

Cook once, eat multiple times. Batch cook protein meals like meatballs, lentil curry or egg muffins to keep in the fridge or freezer.

4 easy meal prep ideas

These protein-rich batch meals will see you through the week

What to make	How to make it
Chicken, quinoa and roasted veg (35g of protein per serving)	Roast the chicken breasts with your preferred veg (red onion, peppers and courgette all work well). Portion out with the quinoa. A lemon, garlic and Greek yoghurt dressing works nicely drizzled on top.
Turkey and lentil chilli (30g of protein per serving)	Cook lean turkey mince with tinned tomatoes, kidney beans, red lentils and your favourite spices. This freezes well, and it can also be used in wraps, with baked potatoes or with rice, so you can mix things up.
Tofu stir-fry (20-25g of protein per serving)	Stir-fry some extra-firm tofu with broccoli, pepper and sugar-snap peas and make a quick sauce from soy, ginger and garlic. Serve with brown rice or noodles.
Cheese and egg muffins (12g of protein per 2 muffins)	A great breakfast to make ahead of time and eat on the go. Whisk eggs and cottage cheese together before adding spinach and chopped peppers. Bake in a cupcake tray and keep in the fridge for up to 5 days.

8.9g
PROTEIN PER FRITTATA

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Spring vegetable frittatas

Batch cook these frittatas for an easy midweek breakfast

Serves **6** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **10-12 mins**

6 large free-range eggs

100g (⅔ cup) asparagus, chopped

60g (½ cup) frozen peas, cooked

4 spring onions (scallions), sliced

2 tbsp fresh dill, chopped

75g (½ cup) feta, crumbled

salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4. Alternatively, preheat an air fryer to 170°C/340°F.
2. Whisk the eggs in a bowl and season with salt and pepper. Stir in the asparagus, peas, spring onions, dill and feta.
3. Spoon the mixture into silicone muffin cups, place in the oven and cook for 15-20 minutes until set and slightly golden (10-12 minutes if using an air fryer). Serve warm.

PER FRITTATA:

Calories: **119**, Fat **7.4g**, Saturates **3.3g**, Carbohydrate **3.3g**, Sugars **1.7g**, Fibre **0.9g**, Protein **8.9g**, Salt **0.35g**

Habit tracker

✓ **Today I...** Batch cooked some high protein meals for the week

Do this... **ONCE A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Overnight oats with protein powder, flaxseed and berries

Lunch

Bean and lentil salad with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and avocado

Dinner

Chickpea and spinach curry with a scoop of Greek yoghurt and brown rice

DAY 18

Today focus on plant-based proteins

Increasing protein doesn't mean more meat. There are great plant proteins to explore

You don't have to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet to benefit from plant-based proteins. Swapping in whole food plant-based protein sources a few times a week can improve your protein variety, increase fibre, and support a more diverse gut microbiome. It's also a great strategy for people looking to cut back on meat without sacrificing nutrition or satisfaction.

Options like tofu, tempeh, lentils, beans and edamame are protein-rich, accessible, and easy to incorporate into familiar dishes. These foods are often packed with additional nutrients like iron, magnesium and calcium, and they naturally contain little to no saturated fat.

Here's how to do it...

Start with tofu – it's versatile and takes the flavour of what it's cooked with. Choose extra-firm for stir-fries, curries and salads. Press out the water, then cube, marinate in tamari, garlic or spices, and pan-fry or bake until golden. For sauces, smoothies or desserts, try silken tofu blended with banana, berries, or nut butter.

Tempeh has a firmer texture and a slightly nutty, earthy flavour. It's made from fermented soybeans, which may benefit digestion and gut health. Slice and pan-fry tempeh to add to wraps, salads, or grain bowls, or crumble it into dishes like chilli, pasta sauce, or tacos for a satisfying swap.

Also try whole legumes like chickpeas, black beans, lentils and edamame. These provide 7-10g of protein per cooked half cup, and work well in curries, stir-fries, stews, Buddha bowls, or even as meatball or burger bases. Pair with whole grains such as quinoa or wild rice to boost both meal texture and the amino acid profile.

You don't need to change your whole menu – just build a few meals per week around plant protein to feel the benefit.

Make it easy

Swap meat for tofu, tempeh or lentils once or twice a week. Flavour well and pair with grains for easy plant protein wins.

4 *alternative* sources of plant-based protein

It's not just about the tofu – here are some plant-based protein sources you may not have tried

The protein source	How to eat it
Edamame beans (11g of protein per 100g)	These tasty little beans are fantastic in a stir-fry, salad or bowl of ramen noodles.
Tempeh (19g of protein per 100g)	Made from fermented soybeans, this is a nuttier alternative to tofu. Pan fry a few strips and add to salad, or crumble into a wrap.
Black beans (8-9g of protein per 100g)	Instead of kidney beans, try black beans for an earthy, sweet taste. Try them smashed in a taco, with lime and coriander in a rice bowl or blended into a bean burger.
Seitan (20-25g of protein per 100g)	Less common in UK supermarkets, this wheat protein can be made at home or found in a good vegan section. It has a meaty texture that works well in sandwiches as a chicken replacement.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Spicy 'meaty' tacos with avo and cream

This plant-based taco filling is packed with great protein sources

By Dr Rupy Aujla

Serves **2** | Prep **20 mins** | Cook **25 mins**

41.1g
PROTEIN PER SERVING

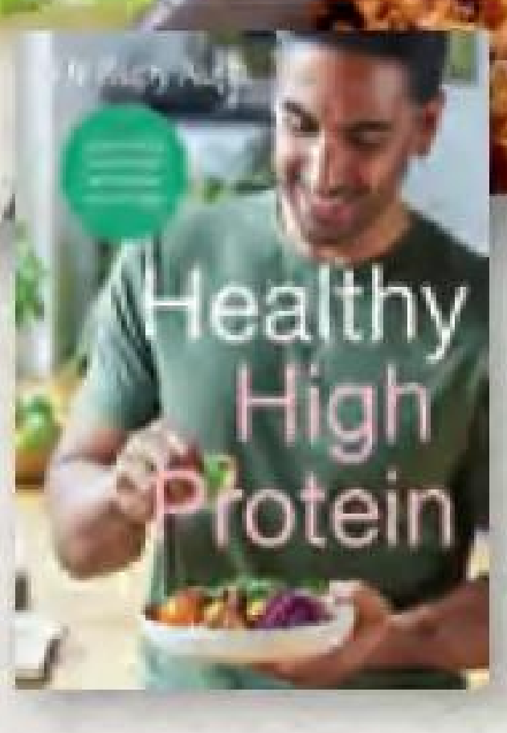
2 tbsp olive oil
150g (1 cup) onion, finely chopped
250g (2½ cups) mushrooms, finely chopped
200g (1 cup) tempeh, coarsely grated
2 large garlic cloves, finely chopped
50g (½ cup) walnuts, finely chopped
2 tsp hot smoked paprika
2 tsp fajita or Cajun spice mix
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp tomato purée (paste)
20g (½ cup) nutritional yeast
3 tbsp sour cream
1 tbsp lime juice

For the slaw
100g (⅔ cup) red cabbage, finely sliced
1 tbsp lime juice
1 small red onion, thinly sliced

To serve
4 medium corn tortillas, warmed
1 baby gem lettuce, shredded
1 avocado, halved, stone removed and sliced
30g (¼ cup) jalapeños from a jar
1 lime, zested, then quartered

1. Heat the oil in a large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the onion and fry for 5 minutes until turning golden, then add the mushrooms and tempeh and cook, stirring often, for 8 minutes until there is no sign of liquid, and everything is browned. Add the garlic and walnuts and cook for 2 minutes more, then season.
2. Stir the spices into the pan followed by the soy sauce, purée, yeast and 6 tbsp water. Turn the heat to low-medium and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 6-8 minutes until cooked through, adding a splash of water to loosen if needed.
3. Meanwhile, for the slaw, massage the cabbage, lime juice, onion and a good pinch of salt in a bowl for a few minutes until the cabbage starts to break down and soften. Set aside.
4. Mix the cream and lime juice in a bowl, season with salt and set aside.
5. To assemble, place a warm tortilla on each plate and top with the lettuce, 'meaty' mixture, slaw, avocado, a spoonful of cream mixture and finish with the jalapeños and a squeeze of lime juice with zest. Serve the tortillas flat or rolled up.

PER SERVING:
Calories: **660**, Fat **42g**, Saturates **7.5g**, Carbohydrate **38g**, Sugars **10g**, Fibre **11g**, Protein **41.1g**, Salt **2.3g**



Recipe taken from *Healthy High Protein* by Dr Rupy Aujla, photography by Andrew Burton, published by Ebury Press, £22.

Habit tracker

Today I... Chose a plant-based protein option

Do this... **2-3 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today
Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

Energy	☆☆☆☆☆
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆

Notes

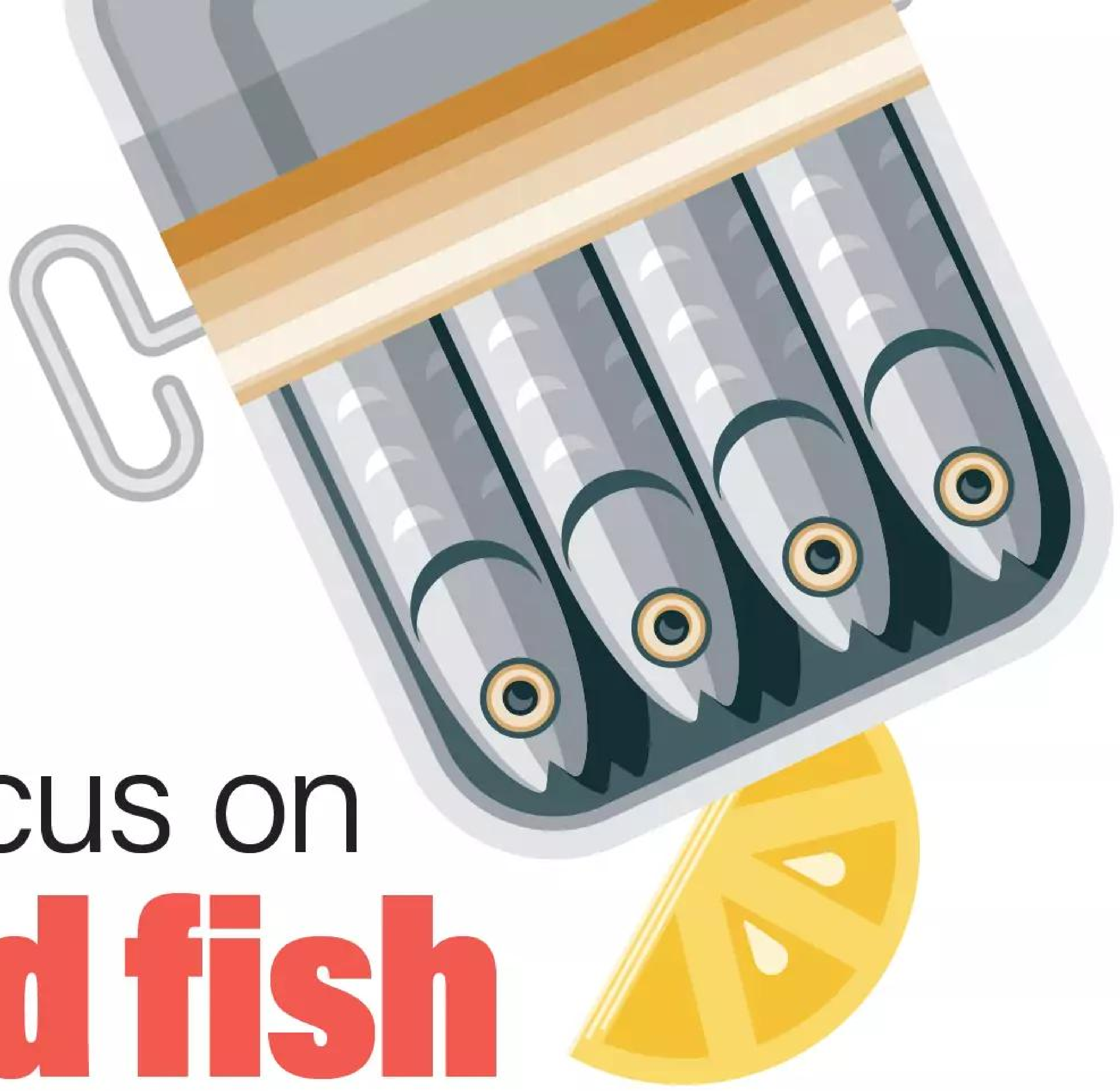
Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast
Overnight oats with protein powder, flaxseed and berries

Lunch
Smoked salmon and boiled egg salad with baby potatoes and rocket

Dinner
Pan-fried cod, couscous and roasted vegetables



DAY 19

Today focus on tinned fish

Proof that high protein choices don't have to be pricey is as simple as buying a tin of tuna!

Tinned fish is one of the most underrated protein staples. It's affordable, long-lasting, and delivers 20-30g of protein per tin, depending on the type. It also offers a healthy dose of omega-3 fatty acids, which support brain, heart and skin health – something many people fall short on in modern diets.

Whether you're looking for quick lunches, travel-friendly options, or ways to keep nutritious food in the cupboard, tinned fish is hard to beat.

Here's how to do it...

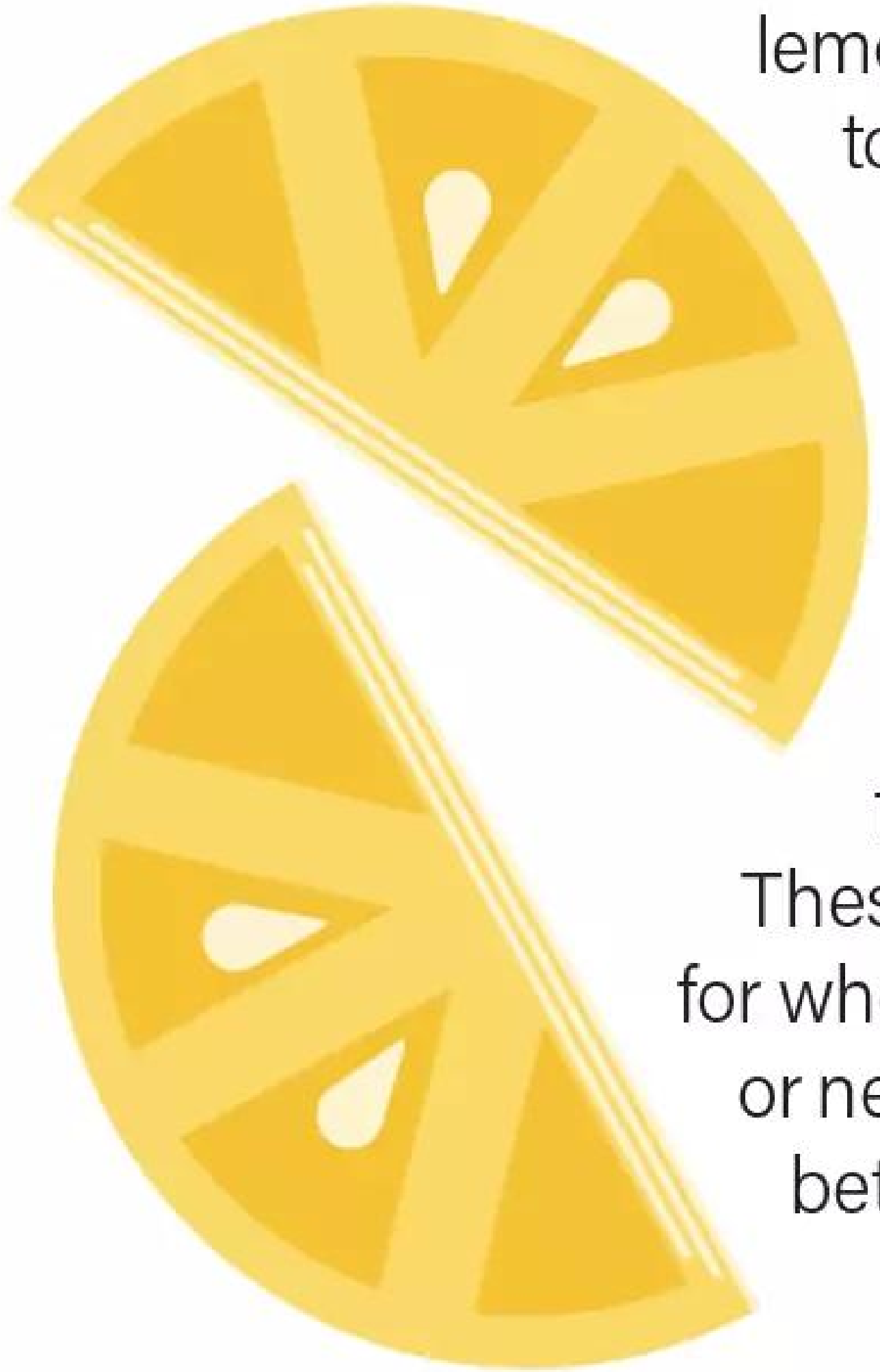
Stock up on a variety: tuna, salmon, sardines and mackerel are all great choices. Tuna is mild and versatile, while sardines and mackerel are richer in flavour and packed with omega-3s and vitamin D.

Mix tuna or salmon with Greek yoghurt, mustard, lemon or herbs for a creamy sandwich or wrap filler. Add to chickpea pasta salads, serve on oatcakes or crackers, or pile onto seeded toast with avocado or tomato.

Tinned sardines can be mashed with lemon juice and olive oil and spread on toast for a protein-rich snack. Or stir them into warm dishes like tomato pasta or rice bowls.

For fast, filling lunches, try pairing a tin of fish with quinoa, roasted vegetables, and leafy greens. Add boiled eggs or beans for extra protein if needed.

These cupboard heroes are perfect for when you have run out of fresh food or need something quick and satisfying between meetings.

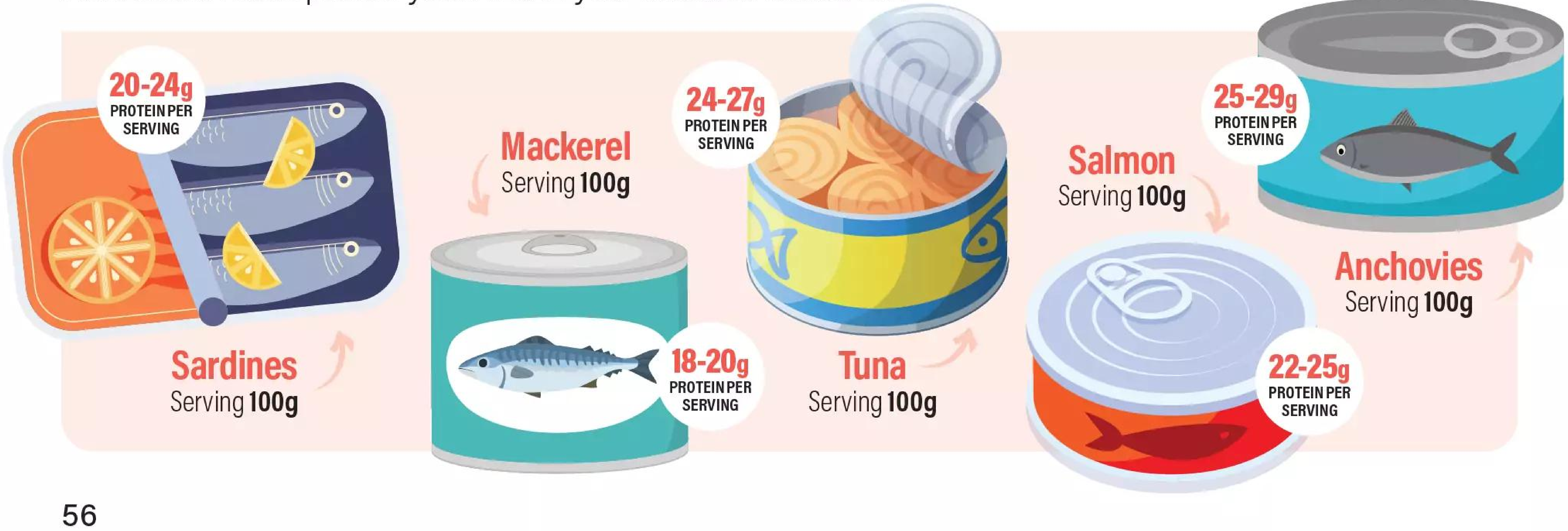


Make it easy

Check the labels and aim for versions tinned in water or olive oil, rather than sunflower oil or brine. Also look for pole-and-line caught or MSC-certified options if sustainability matters to you.

How much protein is in tinned fish?

Here's how much protein you'll find in your favourite tinned fish


20-24g
PROTEIN PER SERVING
Sardines
Serving 100g
Mackerel
Serving 100g
18-20g
PROTEIN PER SERVING
24-27g
PROTEIN PER SERVING
Tuna
Serving 100g
Salmon
Serving 100g
25-29g
PROTEIN PER SERVING
Anchovies
Serving 100g
22-25g
PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Harissa chickpeas with pan-fried salmon

Salmon and chickpeas provide plenty of protein in this rich sauce with a kick

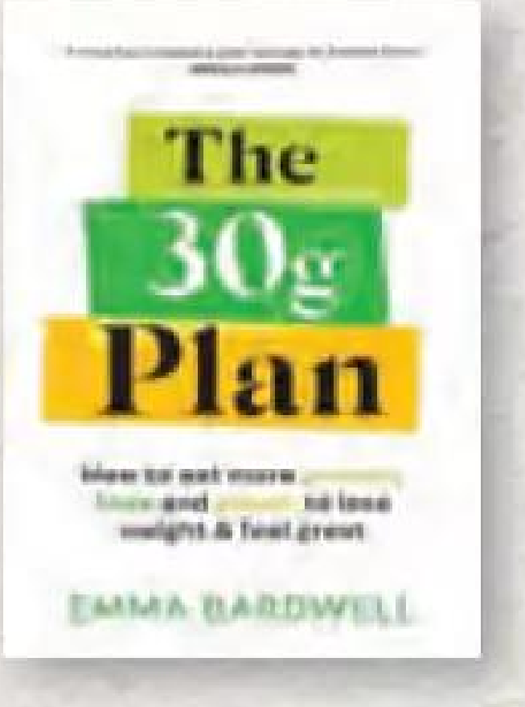
By Emma Bardwell

Serves **2** | Prep **15 mins** | Cook **30-40 mins**

41g PROTEIN PER SERVING

- **1 tsp harissa paste**
- **1 medium white onion, finely diced**
- **1 medium carrot, finely diced**
- **1 celery stick, finely diced**
- **3 garlic cloves, minced**
- **1 tin of chickpeas, drained and rinsed**
- **400ml (1⅔ cups) vegetable stock (broth)**
- **2-3 tbsp nutritional yeast or 50g (½ cup) Parmesan, grated**
- **a small bag of rocket (arugula)**
- **2 salmon fillets, washed and dried well with kitchen towel**

1. Heat a few sprays of oil in a medium size non-stick frying pan and sauté the onion, carrot, celery and garlic with a good pinch of salt for 5-10 minutes until starting to soften.
2. Tip the chickpeas and stock in and add the harissa paste and 2 tbsp nutritional yeast (if using). Stir well to combine. Allow to bubble, then turn down the heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the liquid starts to thicken.
3. Meanwhile, add a few sprays of oil to a small frying pan on a medium heat. Lightly score the skin of the salmon three or four times and lay skin-side down in the pan. Cook for 4-5 minutes until crisp and golden, then flip over and fry until cooked through and the flesh flakes easily.
4. Turn off the heat. Add in the Parmesan (if using) or the final 1 tbsp nutritional yeast to the chickpeas and stir to combine, making a nice cheesy, fairly thick saucy broth. Serve the chickpeas with the rocket and salmon.



Recipe taken from *The 30g Plan* by Emma Bardwell, published by Vermillion, £16.99.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **460**, Fat **19g**, Saturates **4g**, Carbohydrate **25g**, Sugars **6g**, Fibre **7g**, Protein **41g**, Salt **1.2g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Used tinned fish in one of my meals

Do this... **2-3 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

Energy	☆☆☆☆☆
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆

Notes

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

3-egg omelette with mushrooms, tomatoes and low-fat cheese

Lunch

Lentil and egg power bowl with tinned tuna or salmon

Dinner

Veggie stir-fry with tofu, edamame, cashews, and rice noodles

DAY 20

Today focus on protein-rich vegetables

The right vegetable choices can really help to boost the protein number in a meal

Make it easy

Add edamame, peas or spinach to meals. Keep frozen versions on hand for a quick way to sneak in extra protein.

While vegetables aren't always thought of as a protein source, some contribute meaningfully, especially when you combine them with protein-rich foods throughout the day. Adding protein-rich veg is an easy way to elevate the nutritional value of meals, while increasing fibre, antioxidants and vitamins.

Top contenders include spinach, kale, green peas, edamame, Brussels sprouts, broccoli and asparagus. Edamame, in particular, is a stand-out, offering about 11g of protein per 100g cooked.

Here's how to do it...

Steam a bowl of edamame as a snack, toss them into salads, or brown rice bowls. Green peas (about 5g protein per 100g) are easy to add to soups, pasta dishes and risottos. You can even blend them into sauces for a protein and fibre boost.

Leafy greens, such as spinach and kale, may not offer huge protein boosts per gram, but they are rich in iron, calcium and magnesium as well, and when added generously to omelettes, curries or stews, they increase the nutrient density of your dish significantly.

Broccoli, asparagus and Brussels sprouts also contain small, but meaningful, amounts of protein (2-3g per 100g), and they're perfect for roasting, steaming or sautéing alongside lean meat, fish, tofu or grains.

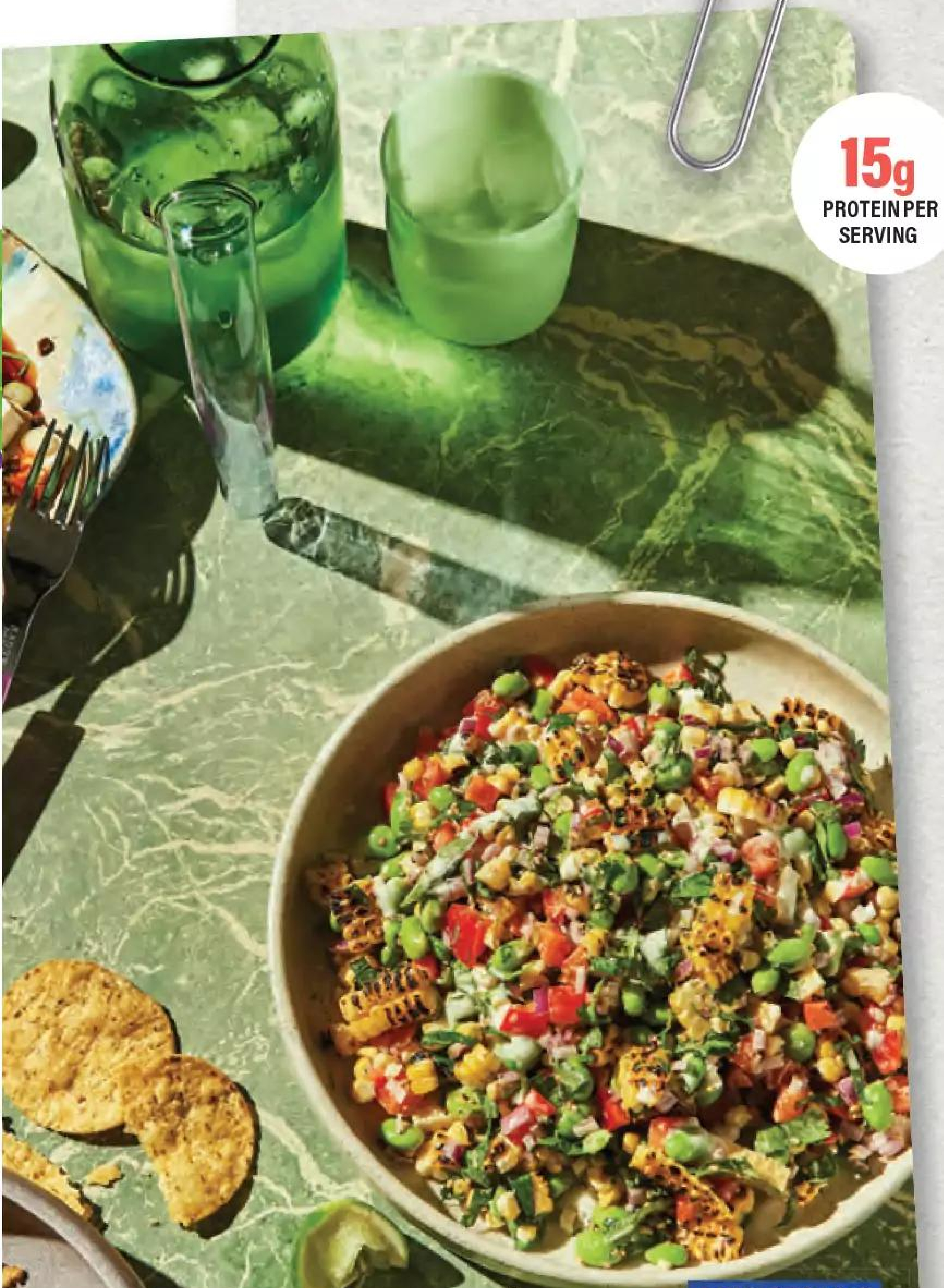
Use frozen veg to save time and money – it's just as nutritious and allows you to always have options on hand. Stir into meals near the end of cooking, or roast with olive oil, garlic and herbs.

When you start looking at vegetables not just as colour on the plate, but as useful protein contributors, your meals become more functional, more filling and easier to build.

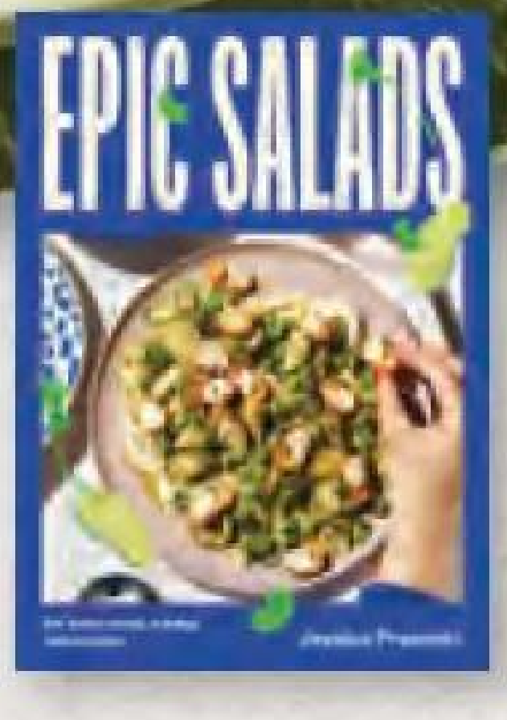
The top 4 protein-rich vegetables

Add this veg to your next meal for even more protein points

Protein source	Top tips
Green peas (5g of protein per 100g cooked)	Peas are an easy addition to most meals, but try smashing them on toast with mint and lemon if you want them to take centre stage.
Cooked spinach (3g of protein per 100g)	You'll need more than you think, as spinach shrinks down as it cooks. Stir into curries, soups and stews, or add to an omelette.
Broccoli (3g of protein per 100g cooked)	Broccoli is also high in fibre, so it's a great choice of protein-rich veg. Try blitzing into a soup for extra volume.
Brussels sprouts (4g of protein per 100g cooked)	Roast with garlic, or try shredding into a slaw or stir-fry for a slightly different texture.



15g PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *Epic Salads* by Jessica Prescott, photography by Rochelle Eagle, published by Quadrille, £25.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Grilled corn and edamame salsa

This edamame side dish pairs well with Mexican flavours and contains around 15g of protein per serving

By Jessica Prescott

Serves **2** | Prep **15 mins** | Cook **10-15 mins**

For the dressing

- **2 tbsp Japanese mayo**
- **juice and grated zest of 1 lime**

For the salsa

- **1 tbsp olive oil**
- **2-3 ears of cooked corn**
- **200g (1¼ cups) shelled edamame**
- **1 large red pepper, diced to about the size of corn kernels**
- **a large handful of Vietnamese mint leaves, roughly chopped**
- **½ a red onion, finely chopped**
- **a large handful of coriander (cilantro) leaves, roughly chopped**
- **1 tbsp toasted sesame seeds**
- **corn chips or fried wonton wrappers, cut into small squares, to serve**

1 Combine the mayo and lime juice and zest in a mixing bowl and whisk until smooth.

2 Cook the corn by slicing the kernels from the cob (or use tinned or frozen kernels) and fry them with 1 tbsp oil and a pinch of salt in a hot frying pan.

3 Allow to cool, unless serving immediately. Put the cooked corn, edamame, pepper and red onion in the bowl with the lime mayo and stir to combine. Taste, season, then toss with the herbs and sesame seeds. Serve with corn chips or fried wonton wrappers on the side to scoop it all up.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **285**, Fat **17g**, Saturates **2.5g**, Carbohydrate **22g**, Sugars **6g**, Fibre **5g**, Protein **15g**, Salt **0.6g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Added some protein-rich veg to my meals

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

3-egg omelette with mushrooms, tomatoes and low-fat cheese

Lunch

Bean and lentil salad with cucumber, cherry tomatoes and avocado

Dinner

Burrito bowl with black beans, chicken strips, cheese, quinoa and salsa

DAY 21

Today focus on eating protein before carbs

It's not just what you consume that is important, but also how and when you eat it

Research shows that eating protein before carbohydrates at a meal can significantly improve blood sugar control, enhance satiety and reduce energy crashes. This is especially helpful if you experience dips in concentration, post-meal sluggishness, or often have cravings for sugar and caffeine later in the day.

This simple tweak can make meals feel more satisfying and help you naturally moderate portions without removing any foods from your plate.

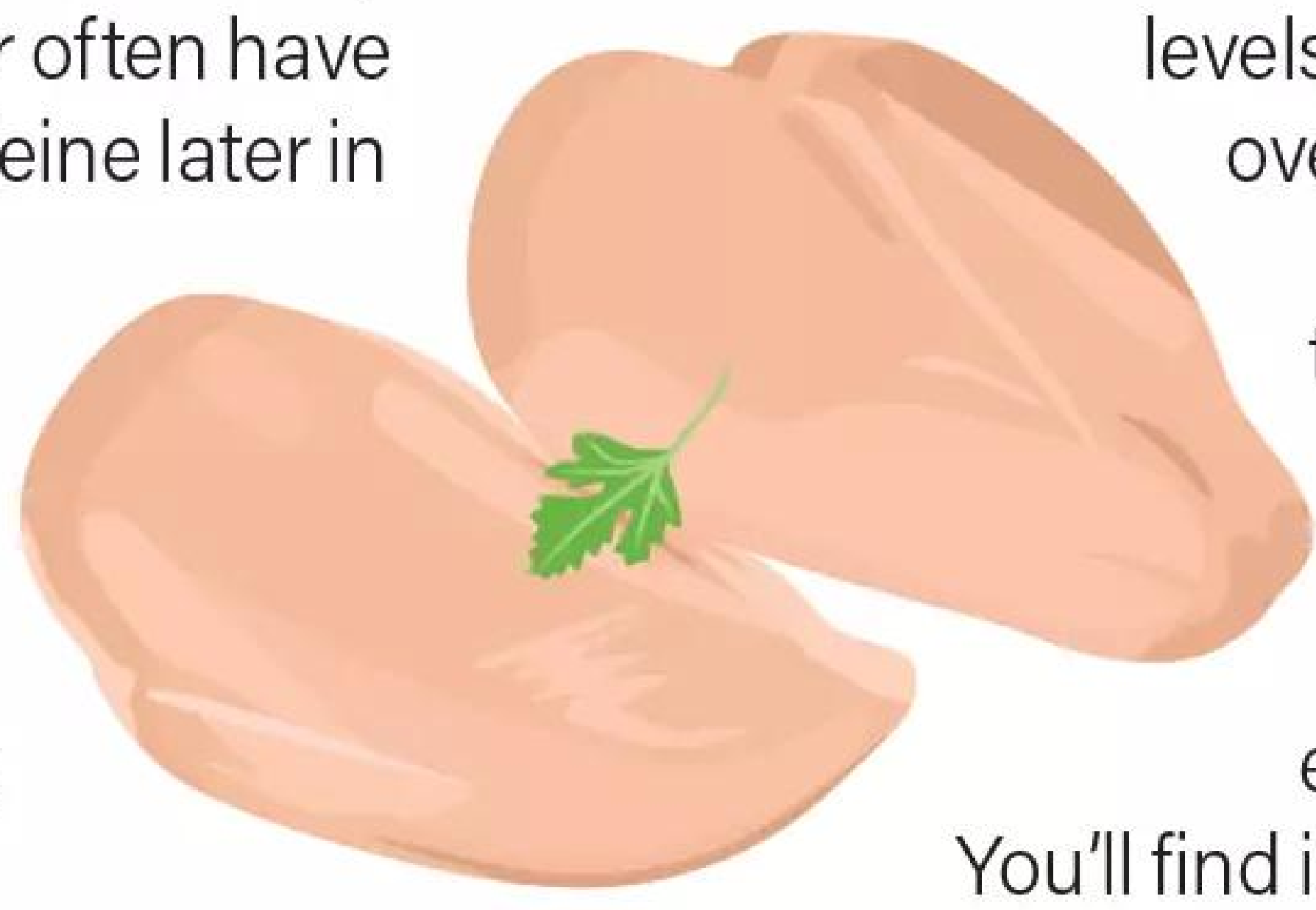
Here's how to do it...

At each meal, identify the main source of protein – this could be eggs, chicken, tofu, Greek yoghurt, tempeh, fish or beans. Begin your meal by eating this first, before moving on to the carbohydrates like pasta, rice, bread or potatoes.

The reason? Protein slows down the digestion and absorption of carbs, which reduces blood sugar spikes and helps your body release insulin more steadily. This then supports your energy levels and appetite regulation over several hours.

Apply this habit to snacks too. Rather than eating fruit alone, pair it with a source of protein, such as nuts, cheese, a boiled egg, or Greek yoghurt. You'll find it more satisfying and it's less likely to leave you feeling hungry soon after.

This is not about being rigid or overthinking your meals, it's a small shift that can lead to noticeable improvements in how you feel after eating.



Make it easy

Start meals with your protein source first – it helps balance blood sugar, supports satiety, and encourages more mindful eating.

Top tips for leading with protein

Here's how to make sure you're eating enough protein before other macronutrients

Top tip	Why do it?
Start your meals with a few bites of protein	Having a few mouthfuls of your protein source before touching the rest of your meal will slow digestion and limit blood sugar spikes.
Begin a meal with a protein-packed starter	Some salty edamame makes a lovely starter before a stir-fry or noodle dish and will help prep your system for the carbs that follow.
Rearrange your plate	Make protein the main feature on your plate and you'll naturally want to eat it first.
If having snacks, make them protein-rich	Snacking on nuts or houmous will keep you feeling full for longer while also curbing any blood sugar spikes before you eat a meal.

33g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Chicken in a bag with olives and capers

This chicken makes a great protein centrepiece

By Fern Green

Serves **2** | Prep **5 mins** | Cook **25 mins**

- **2 chicken breasts**
- **10 large green olives, pitted, sliced**
- **2 tbsp capers, drained**
- **juice of 1 lemon**
- **1 lemon, sliced**
- **2 handfuls of new potatoes, cut into bite-size pieces (optional)**
- **1 tbsp chopped parsley**
- **1-2 tbsp olive oil**
- **salt and freshly ground black pepper**

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Place the potatoes on a baking tray. When the oven is hot, pop the potatoes in for 15 minutes to give them a head start, or add them to the basket of an air fryer with a tray on top.
2. Cut two square sheets of baking paper and lay a chicken breast in the middle of each. Top with the lemon slices, olives and capers. Drizzle with olive oil and season.
3. Close the paper by lifting opposite ends, folding the top over a few times, then wrapping the ends underneath to form a parcel. Roast alongside the potatoes for 20 minutes, or cook everything in the air fryer for 20 minutes at 180°C/360°F.
4. After 20 minutes, open the parcels and cook for 5 minutes until slightly brown. Serve sprinkled with parsley and a squeeze of lemon.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **435**, Fat **23g**, Saturates **4g**, Carbohydrate **22g**, Sugars **2.5g**, Fibre **3g**, Protein **33g**, Salt **2.2g**

Habit tracker

☑ **Today I...** Tried eating the protein in a meal first

Do this... **REGULARLY**

End of week reflection

The habit I enjoyed most this week was...	**My favourite meal this week was...**
The habit I think benefited me most was...	**My biggest takeaway from this week is...**
The habit I struggled with most was...	**My new favourite ingredient is...**
Overall this week my energy has been...	**Average protein amount per day:** **Amount of water I drank each day...**

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Overnight oats with protein powder, flaxseed and berries

Lunch

Smoked salmon and boiled egg salad with baby potatoes and rocket

Dinner

Turkey and bean chilli with brown rice, topped with Greek yoghurt

DAY
22

Today focus on protein powder

Whole food protein is always best, but protein powder is a useful way to top-up on busy days

Protein powder isn't just for athletes or bodybuilders – it's a practical, efficient way to boost your protein intake when time, appetite or energy are limited. A single scoop typically delivers 20-25g of protein, making it ideal for topping up meals or filling gaps between whole food sources. It's also one of the easiest protein habits to build into your daily routine.

Protein powder's real strength lies in its versatility. From porridge to smoothies, pancakes to coffee, it blends into your existing meals without much effort or prep time. With options like whey, pea, hemp and collagen, there's a version to suit most dietary needs and health goals.

Here's how to do it...

Choose a clean, good-quality powder that fits your preferences and tolerances.

- Whey isolate is great post-exercise and is quickly absorbed.
- Pea or hemp protein works well for plant-based diets.
- Collagen peptides, although not a complete protein, offer joint, skin and gut health benefits and dissolve easily into hot or cold drinks. Collagen is especially useful in the morning if you're not hungry but want to start the day with some protein. Add it to coffee, herbal teas, or bone broth for a warming boost.

Now think beyond shakes. Stir your protein powder into overnight oats, porridge, yoghurt, or chia pudding. Mix powder into smoothies, or add to homemade snacks like protein muffins, pancakes, or energy balls made with oats and nut butter.

For a cosy drink, stir unflavoured protein powder (including collagen) into your coffee, matcha, or hot chocolate. It won't affect the taste, but adds a significant protein boost.

Use protein powder as a top-up, not a primary source. Whole food proteins still form the foundation of your meals, but powder helps fill the gaps when life gets busy or your appetite is lower.

Make it easy

Add a scoop of protein powder – or collagen peptides – to porridge, yoghurt, smoothies or coffee for an effortless protein boost anytime.

5 *key types* of protein powder

Here's how to make sense of what you see on the tub

Powder	What is it?	Best for
Whey protein	This protein comes from milk and has a smooth, creamy texture. 'Whey concentrate' generally contains 70-80 per cent protein with some fats.	Building muscle, post workout recovery, quick digestion.
Casein protein	Casein protein is the other protein found in milk, along with whey. It's absorbed more slowly by the body and has a thicker texture.	Sustained, slow protein release, stopping muscle breakdown overnight.
Plant-based protein	This is usually sourced from peas, rice, hemp or soy. It's often made from a blend of proteins to ensure a complete amino acid profile.	Vegans and vegetarians, lactose intolerance, a more sustainable option.
Egg white protein	Dehydrated egg whites make up this protein powder. It has a smooth texture that's a bit foamy when shaken.	People seeking a lean, complete protein source without too much carbohydrate.
Collagen peptides	This protein comes from animal connective tissue like bones and skin. It's not a complete protein, but it has a very neutral taste	Hair, skin, nail and joint health, adding to coffee or smoothies.

33g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Mushroom, feta and red pepper omelette

Eggs, feta and seeds make this a high-protein breakfast option

By Emma Bardwell

Serves **1** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **15 mins**

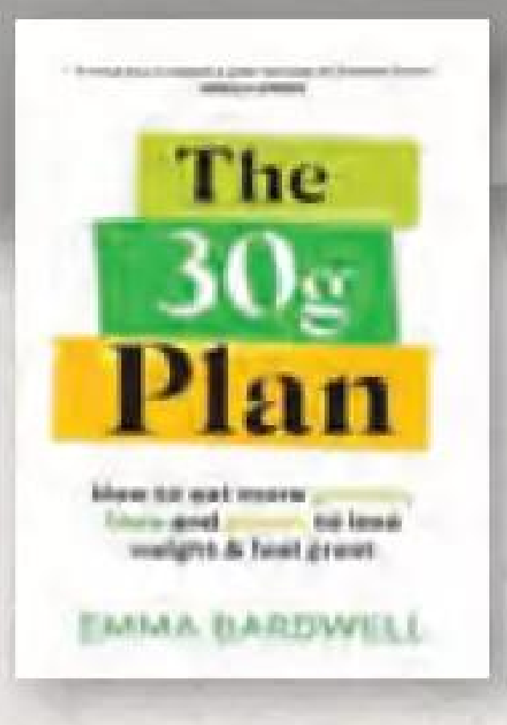
- **150g (1½ cups) mushrooms, sliced**
- **50g (½ cup) feta, crumbled**
- **85g (⅔ cup) broccoli, broken into small florets**
- **1 red pepper, diced**
- **2 spring onions (scallions), thinly sliced**
- **2 large eggs, lightly whisked and seasoned with salt and pepper**
- **mixed green salad (30g), to serve**
- **1 tbsp mixed seeds**
- **spray oil**

1. Heat a few sprays of oil in a frying pan and add the mushrooms. Cook until nice and brown, then set to one side.
2. In the same pan, add the peppers, broccoli and spring onions and cook for a few minutes until soft.
3. Add the mushrooms back in and arrange so there's an even distribution of vegetables across the pan.
4. Tip in the whisked eggs and move the pan to ensure they reach all sides. Cook for a minute or so, carefully lifting the edges to ensure there's no burning underneath.
5. When the omelette is cooked underneath, add the feta and set the pan under a hot grill to melt the cheese.
6. Serve with a large mixed green salad and a sprinkle of mixed seeds.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **365**, Fat **25g**, Saturates **7g**, Carbohydrate **10g**, Sugars **6g**, Fibre **5g**, Protein **33g**, Salt **1.5g**

Recipe taken from *The 30g Plan* by Emma Bardwell, published by Vermillion, £16.99.



Habit tracker

Today I... Found a protein powder to try

Do this... ONCE A WEEK

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Granary toast with cottage cheese, poached eggs and chilli flakes

Lunch

Tuna niçoise salad (tuna, egg, potatoes, green beans, olives)

Dinner

Chicken pasta bake with tomato sauce, mozzarella and chickpea pasta

DAY 23

Today focus on snacking on nut butter

A little goes a long way with nut butter, but it can be a very useful high protein snack

Nut butters aren't just delicious, they're also a smart way to sneak more protein into your diet. While not as high in protein per gram as animal sources or legumes, one tablespoon of peanut or almond butter provides around 4-6g of protein, plus healthy fats that help with satiety, hormone production and brain health.

They're easy to use, require no prep, and work well in both sweet and savoury dishes, making them a great add-on to boost your daily intake.

Here's how to do it...

Keep a jar of natural peanut, almond or cashew butter in the cupboard. Use it as a topping for apple or banana slices, spread on oatcakes or seeded toast, or stir into porridge or yoghurt. These simple snacks can quickly turn into 10-15g protein when paired with a higher-protein base like Greek yoghurt or protein oats.

For a portable option, squeeze packs of nut butter make a great travel snack. You can also bake it into high-protein flapjacks or energy balls with oats and seeds for batch-prepped snacks throughout the week.

Be sure to choose a brand with no added sugar or hydrogenated oils – just nuts and salt. If you're allergic to peanuts or tree nuts, pumpkin seed butter or tahini can offer a similar texture and modest protein content.

Because nut butter is energy-dense, stick to sensible portions and pair it with fibre (such as fruit or whole grains) to create a balanced snack.

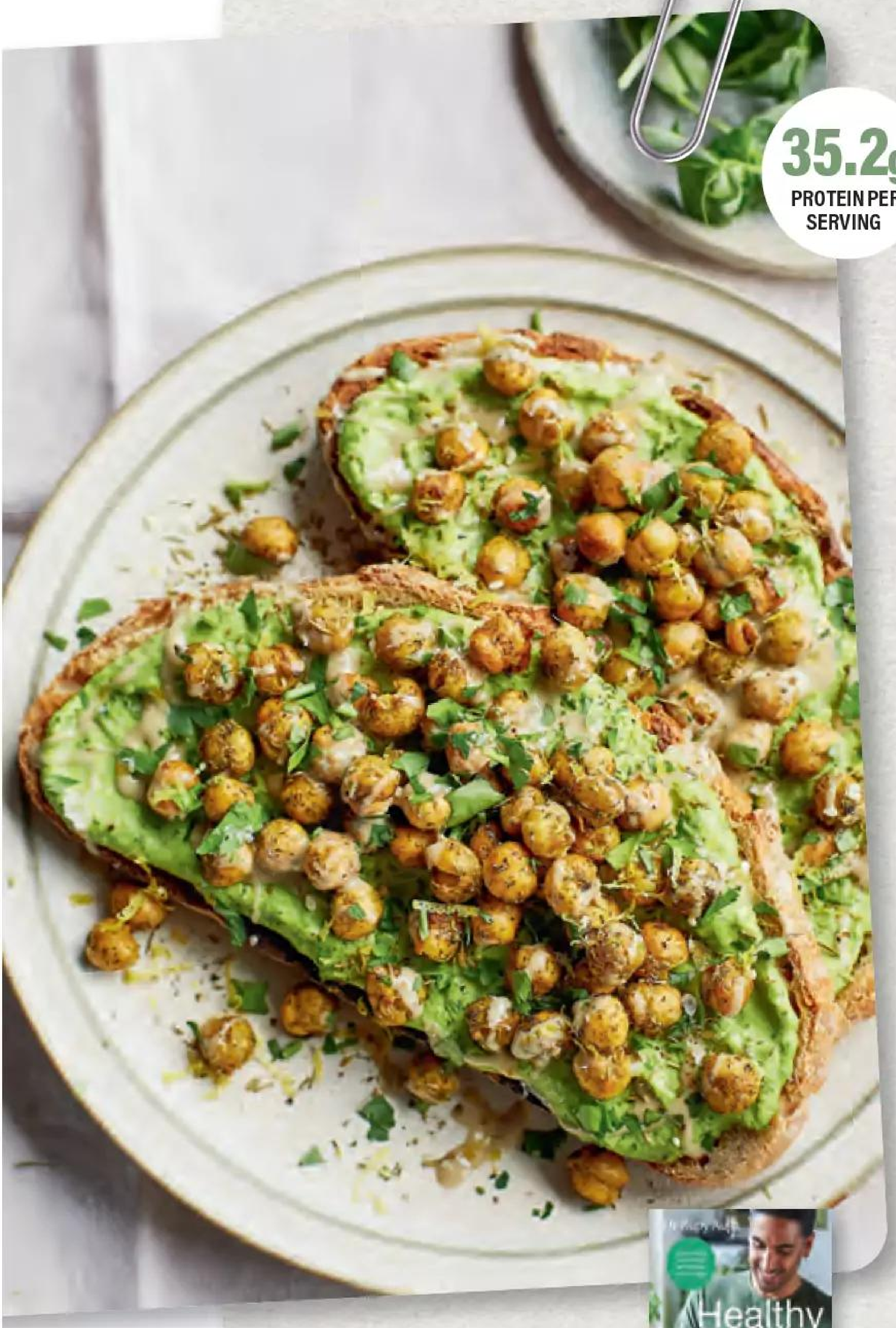
Make it easy

Spread peanut or almond butter on oatcakes, apple slices or seeded toast. Quick, filling and rich in protein, healthy fats and flavour.

4 easy swaps to make the most of nut butter

Here are some simple ways to pack more nut butter into your diet

Instead of this...	...try this!
Butter or jam on toast	Peanut, almond or cashew butter will give you more protein and tastes delicious on toast. Add some sliced banana and chia seeds for an upgrade.
Salad dressing	Mix a spoonful of nut butter with soy sauce, lime juice, ginger, garlic and a splash of water. It'll taste great drizzled on Asian-inspired salads.
Fruit smoothie	Add nut butter to thicken your smoothie and for a richer taste. Try with banana, oat milk and cinnamon if you have a sweet tooth.
Chocolate sauce	If you love a pudding, try drizzling warm nut butter over fruit or Greek yoghurt instead of chocolate sauce.



RECIPE OF THE DAY

Crispy chickpeas on green toast

A few spoonfuls of tahini makes these chickpeas even richer and tops up the protein content to 35.2g per serving

By Emma Bardwell

Serves **2** | Prep **5 mins** | Cook **25 mins**

400g tin (1⅔ cups) of chickpeas, drained and rinsed

1 tbsp za'atar, plus extra to serve

1 tbsp olive oil

150g (1 cup) peas (fresh or defrosted from frozen)

4 tbsp tahini

2 tbsp nutritional yeast

juice and finely grated zest of 1 lemon

4 slices of spelt sourdough (or regular), toasted

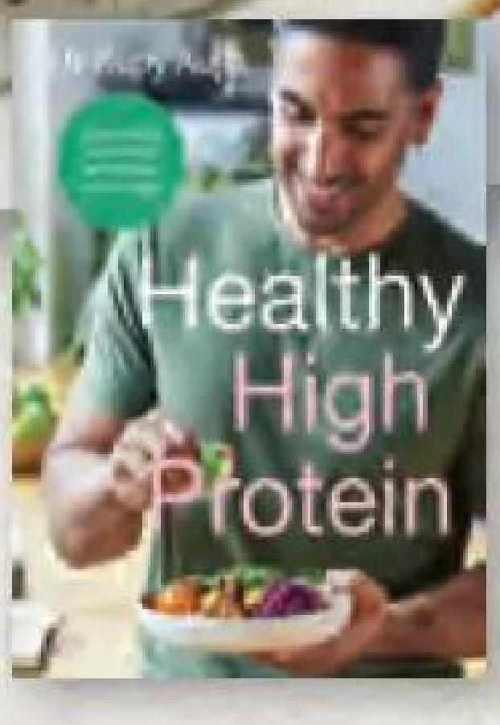
10g (⅓ cup) parsley, finely chopped

20g (2 tbsp) pea shoots, roughly chopped (optional)

1. Preheat the oven to 220°C/Gas Mark 7 and line a baking tray with baking paper.
2. Spread out the chickpeas onto the lined baking tray and dry thoroughly with kitchen paper. Add the za'atar, olive oil and some seasoning. Mix thoroughly with your hands and bake for 20 minutes until crispy.
3. Meanwhile, blend the peas, 2 tbsp tahini, the yeast, lemon juice, a pinch of salt and a splash of hot water in a bullet blender into a smooth green paste. Add more water if needed to help it blend.
4. Spread onto the toasted sourdough, top with the crispy chickpeas, remaining tahini, a sprinkle of za'atar and the lemon zest and finish with the chopped parsley and pea shoots, if using.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **565**, Fat **28g**, Saturates **3.5g**, Carbohydrate **50g**, Sugars **5g**, Fibre **12g**, Protein **35.2g**, Salt **1.2g**



Recipe taken from *Healthy High Protein* by Dr Rupy Aujla, photography by Andrew Burton, published by Ebury Press, £22.

Habit tracker

Today I... Tried snacking on nut butter

Do this...
1-4 TIMES A WEEK

How I feel today Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Granary toast with cottage cheese, poached eggs and chilli flakes

Lunch

Falafel with quinoa, salad and tahini-yoghurt dressing

Dinner

Tempeh peanut stir-fry with broccoli, peppers and noodles

DAY 24

Today focus on eating more seafood

Fish and seafood are great lean protein sources and have omega-3 as a bonus

Fish and shellfish are often underused, but they're among the most protein-rich and nutrient-dense foods available. Seafood offers 20-30g of protein per serving, plus essential fats such as omega-3s (found in oily fish), which reduce inflammation and support heart, brain and skin health.

Adding seafood to your meals a few times per week is one of the simplest ways to boost protein and nutritional quality, especially if you rotate your seafood sources for variety.

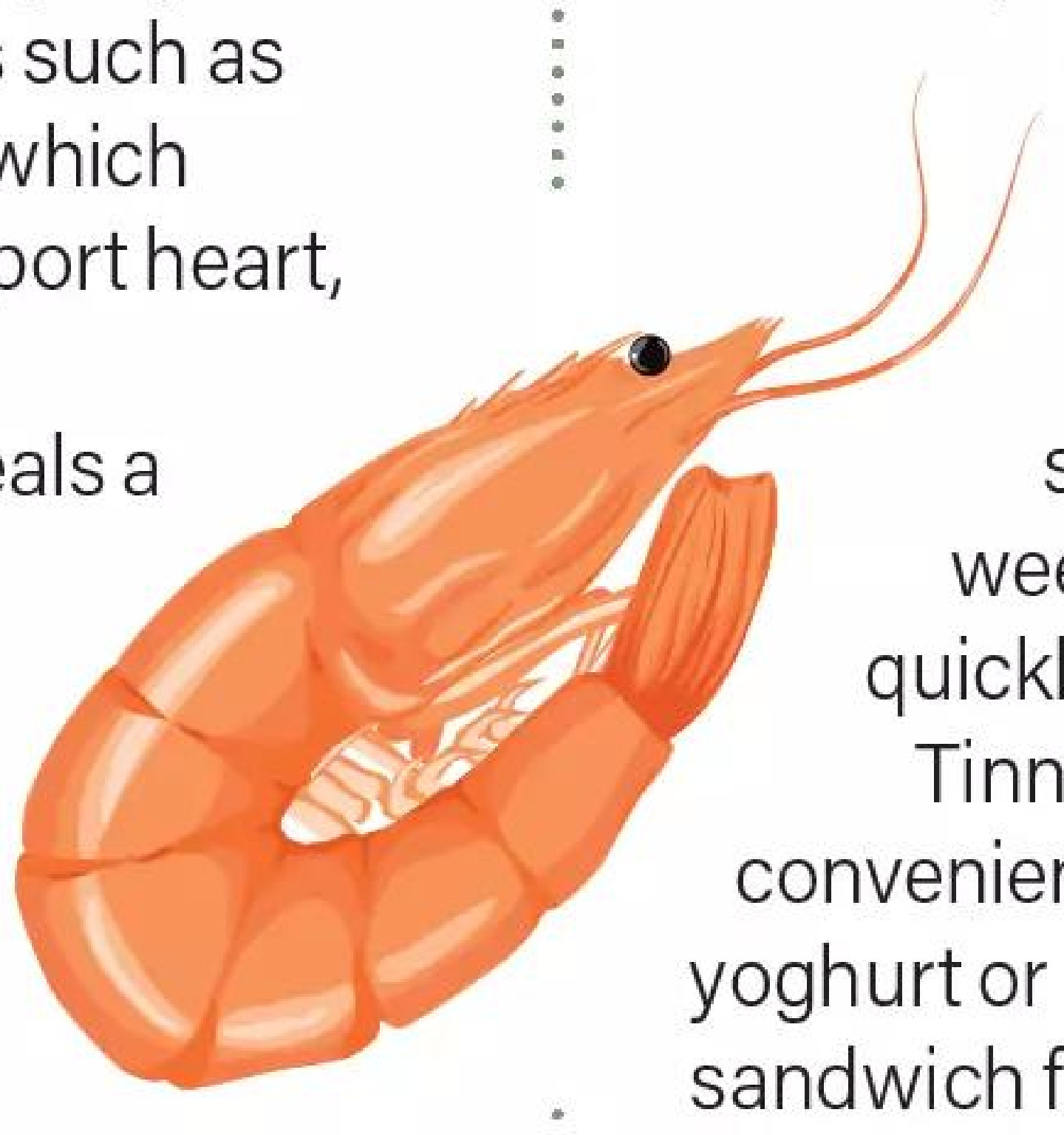
Here's how to do it...

Start with easy, accessible choices like salmon fillets, tinned sardines, frozen prawns or smoked mackerel. Oily fish like salmon, sardines and trout are particularly rich in omega-3 fats, while white fish like cod, hake and haddock are lean, light and high in protein.

Try a salmon stir-fry, grilled mackerel salad, or prawns sautéed with garlic and lemon over courgette noodles. Add sardines to toast, or make a tuna and white bean salad for lunch. Keep frozen seafood on hand for quick week-night meals – it defrosts quickly and cooks fast.

Tinned fish also makes a convenient pantry staple. Mix with Greek yoghurt or avocado for a high-protein sandwich filling or spread on crackers.

Aim for two to three portions of seafood per week – one of which should be oily. If you are pregnant or trying to limit mercury, rotate options and opt for low-mercury fish such as sardines, trout and prawns.



Make it easy

A prawn or tuna jacket potato makes a fantastic lunchtime choice. If you swap the usual mayo for Greek yoghurt or cottage cheese, you'll be adding even more protein to the mix too!

COTTAGE CHEESE

4 *ways* to eat seafood, even if you don't love fish

Not a fan of fishy flavours? Try these tips for a less intense seafood fix

The seafood	How to eat it
King prawns (24g of protein per 100g serving)	King prawns are high in protein and have a more subtle flavour. They cook quickly, so add them to a stir-fry or salad for a fresh flavour.
Cod or haddock (20g of protein per 100g serving)	These white, flaky fishes are very mild in flavour – perfect for breading, baking or pan-frying. Season well and you shouldn't get a fishy flavour at all.
Scallops (18g of protein per 100g serving)	Milder than a lot of seafood, scallops have a sweet, delicate flavour. Pan-sear them for a quick, impressive dinner that's packed with protein and serve with greens.
Tinned tuna (25g of protein per 100g serving)	Tinned tuna is slightly milder than other oily fish and pairs well with lemon or Greek yoghurt, which should cut through the fishy taste.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Chickpea, prawn and cabbage egg fried rice

Prawns and chickpeas pair well in this filling fried rice dish

By Claire Thomson

Serves **4** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **10 mins**

26g PROTEIN PER SERVING

Recipe taken from *One Pan Beans* by Claire Thomson, photography by Sam Folan, published by Quadrille, £20.

- **4 large eggs**
- **2 tbsp soy sauce**
- **1 tsp fish sauce or extra soy sauce**
- **4 tbsp vegetable or sunflower oil**
- **1 tbsp finely grated fresh ginger**
- **2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced**
- **1 small hispi cabbage, core removed and cut into thin wedges or shredded**
- **250g (1½ cups) peeled and deveined medium raw prawns (shrimp), or firm tofu, diced**
- **a bunch of spring onions (scallions), thinly sliced**
- **1 tsp sesame oil**
- **500g (2½ cups) cooked rice (short-grain brown is good), cooled**
- **about 250g (1½ cups) drained cooked or tinned chickpeas (garbanzos)**
- **2 tsp sesame seeds, toasted**
- **fresh red chilli, thinly sliced, to serve**

1. In a small bowl, beat the eggs together with the soy sauce and fish sauce.
2. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a wok or a large non-stick frying pan over a moderate-high heat. Add the ginger and garlic and fry for about 30 seconds until fragrant, then stir in the cabbage and stir-fry for 2 minutes until slightly wilted. Transfer to a plate and put to one side.
3. Put the wok back on the heat and add 1 tbsp oil. Add the prawns and spring onions and fry over moderate heat for 2-3 minutes until the prawns are cooked through. Set aside, along with the cabbage, on the plate.
4. Add the remaining vegetable oil, along with the sesame oil, to the wok. Heat the oil until very hot and add the cooled rice. Stir-fry the rice, ensuring all the grains get coated in the hot oil.
5. Add the beaten eggs and the chickpeas to the rice and continue to fry until all the egg is absorbed by the rice. Stir vigorously and fry for about 3 minutes, or until some rice begins to caramelise.
6. Return the cabbage and prawn mix to the wok and toss with the rice until heated through. Serve with sesame seeds and chilli sprinkled on top.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **520**, Fat **23g**, Saturates **3.5g**, Carbohydrate **45g**, Sugars **4g**, Fibre **6g**, Protein **26g**, Salt **2.4g**

Habit tracker

☑ **Today I...** Chose fish or seafood as my protein for one of my meals

Do this... **2-3 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch

Bean and lentil salad with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and avocado

Dinner

Salmon and edamame rice bowl with shredded carrot, cucumber and soy-lime dressing

DAY 25

Today focus on high-protein smoothies

Smoothies are brilliant on-the-go meals, and can be protein-rich when you know how

Smoothies are one of the easiest and most effective ways to increase protein intake, if they're built well. The problem with most shop-bought or rushed homemade smoothies is that they're too high in fruit and sugar and too low in protein, fat and fibre. That's a fast track to energy dips and hunger an hour later. A well-constructed smoothie, on the other hand, can deliver 20-30g of protein, fill you up for hours, and support everything from muscle recovery to hormone health.

They're ideal if you skip breakfast, find mornings rushed, or struggle with appetite early in the day. They're also a great afternoon pick-me-up, post-workout meal, or light dinner.

Here's how to do it...

Start with a protein base – choose one or two of the following: 1 scoop of protein powder (whey, pea, collagen); 150g Greek yoghurt or cottage cheese; 200ml soy, dairy or high-protein plant milk.

Next, add a fruit source – half a banana or a handful of frozen berries for fibre and sweetness. Add a healthy fat, such as 1 tbsp nut butter, seeds (chia, flax, hemp), or avocado for creaminess and energy.

Finish off with a handful of spinach or kale for added nutrients without affecting flavour. Optional extras include oats (for complex carbs), cinnamon, turmeric or cocoa powder for flavour and antioxidants.

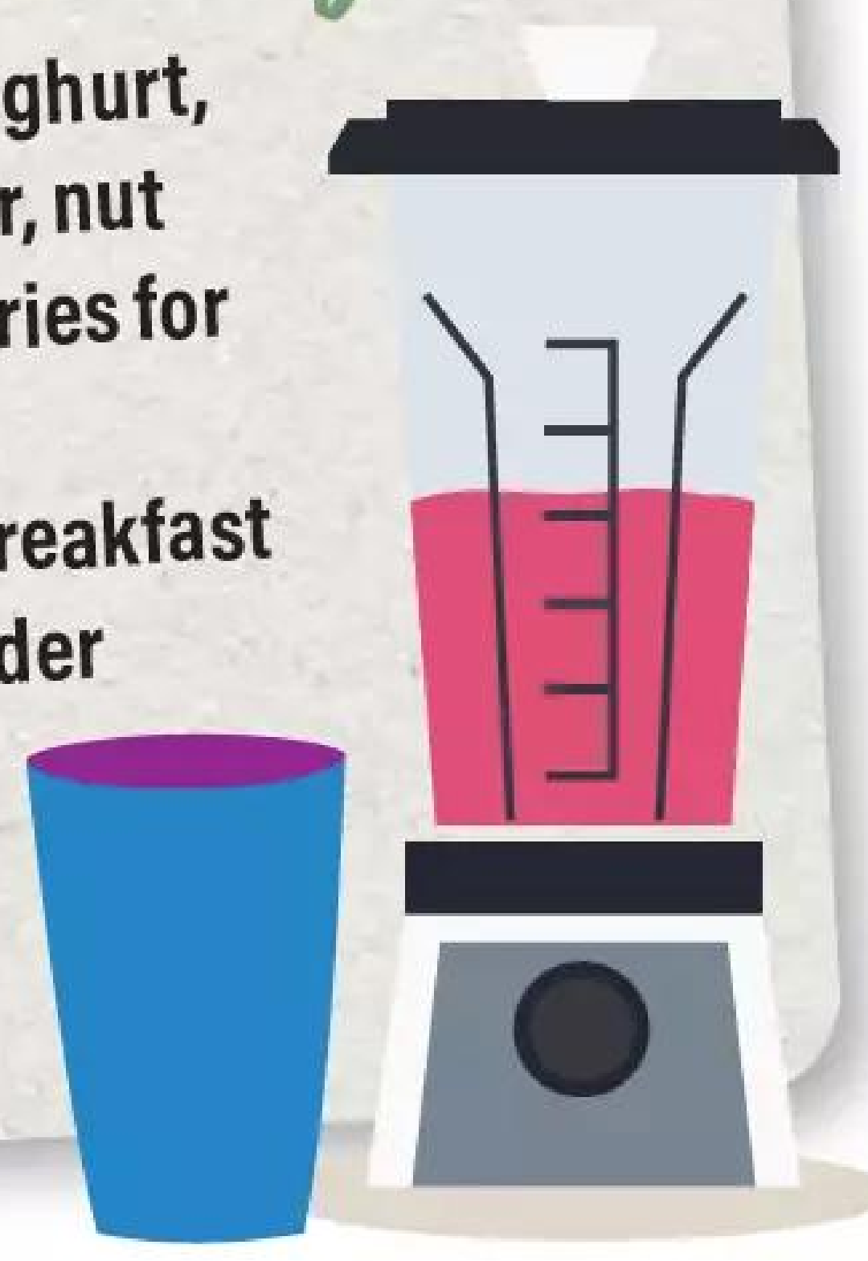
Blend the ingredients together and drink fresh, or make smoothie packs in advance with pre-portioned ingredients stored in freezer bags or containers. Just add liquid and blend.

In winter, use room temperature or gently warmed ingredients to make the smoothie more digestible and seasonal.

Smoothies work best when including all three macronutrients – protein, fat and fibre – so build with intention, not just fruit.

Make it easy

Blend Greek yoghurt, protein powder, nut butter and berries for a fast, filling, protein-rich breakfast or snack in under 5 minutes.



4 *protein-rich* smoothie ideas

These smoothies will keep things interesting while making sure you start your day right

The smoothie	How to make it
Tropical protein smoothie	Blend 75g of frozen mango, half a banana, one scoop of vanilla protein powder, 120ml of coconut water and a handful of spinach.
Peanut butter protein smoothie	Blend one ripe banana, 1 tbsp peanut butter, one scoop of vanilla protein powder and 120ml oat milk with a few ice cubes.
Berry protein smoothie	Blend 75g of frozen mixed berries, one scoop of berry protein powder, 150g Greek yoghurt, 120ml unsweetened almond milk and a splash of lemon juice.
Green protein smoothie	Blend 75g of frozen spinach or kale, half a banana, one scoop of plant-based protein powder, half an avocado and 120ml of unsweetened almond milk.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Tantalising tempeh fried rice

This rice dish shows you can get all the protein you need from plants

By Sophie Waplington

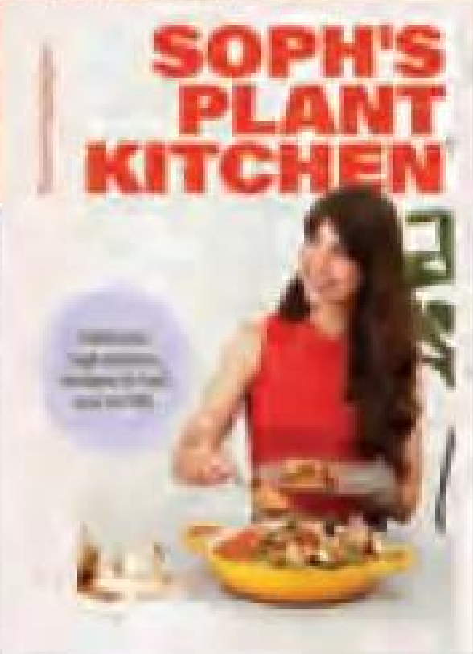
Serves **3** | Prep **1 hr 40 mins** | Cook **20 mins**

300g (1½ cups) brown rice
½ a vegetable stock cube (optional)
300g block of tempeh
2 tbsp sesame oil
1 tbsp tamari
a bunch of spring onions, white and green parts finely chopped
a thumb-size piece of fresh ginger, peeled, minced
4 garlic cloves, minced
½-1 mild red chilli, finely chopped, plus more to serve
150g (1 cup) Tenderstem broccoli, stems roughly chopped into 2cm (¾in) pieces
80g (½ cup) frozen edamame
80g (½ cup) frozen peas
sesame seeds, to serve

For the teriyaki-style sauce
1 tbsp sesame oil
2½ tbsp tamari
1 tbsp maple or agave syrup
1 tbsp mirin
1 tsp toasted sesame oil

1. Cook the rice according to the packet instructions, with the stock cube, if you like, for extra flavour.
2. In a small bowl, mix all the teriyaki sauce ingredients. Set aside.
3. Over a small bowl, crumble the tempeh into small chunks with your hands. Heat 1 tbsp sesame oil in a non-stick frying pan on medium-high heat and, once hot, add the tempeh. Fry for 5 minutes until browning. Add the tamari and mix well. Taste and add a little more tamari if it needs more salt.
4. In a wok or frying pan, add the remaining sesame oil and fry the spring onion whites, ginger, garlic and chilli for 3-4 minutes until fragrant. Add the broccoli and stir-fry for 3-4 minutes until it turns bright green. Add the cooked rice, edamame and peas (straight from frozen is fine, they will thaw in the pan), then tip in the sauce. Mix well, then add the cooked tempeh and heat through.
5. Divide into bowls and serve topped with chilli, the spring onion greens and sesame seeds.

30g PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *Soph's Plant Kitchen* by Sophie Waplington, published by Yellow Kite in hardback, £25

PER SERVING:
Calories: **625**, Fat **28g**, Saturates **4g**, Carbohydrate **58g**, Sugars **8g**, Fibre **8g**, Protein **30g**, Salt **2.2g**

Habit tracker

○ **Today I...** Made myself a protein-rich smoothie

Do this... **1-3 TIMES A WEEK**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

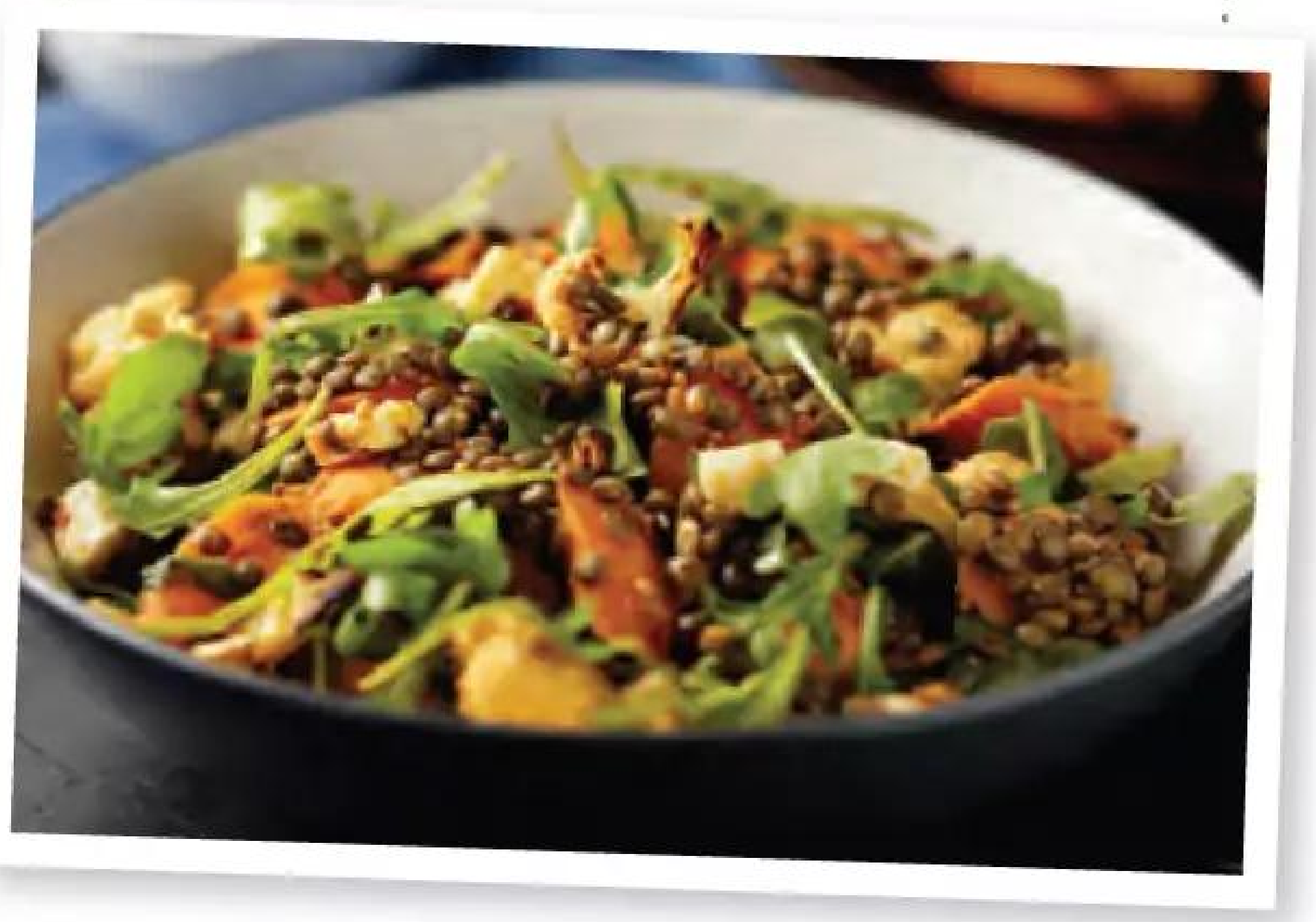
Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch

Tuna niçoise-style salad (tuna, egg, potatoes, green beans, olives)

Dinner

Lentil and halloumi traybake with roast veg, topped with pumpkin seeds



DAY 26

Today focus on staying hydrated

Staying hydrated is key to protein absorption, so it's time to increase that water intake

Hydration might not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of protein habits, but it plays a crucial role in how your body digests, absorbs and uses protein effectively. As you increase protein intake, hydration also needs to increase. This is because protein metabolism creates waste by-products, such as nitrogen, that your kidneys help process and eliminate with the aid of water.

Staying hydrated also supports digestion, mood, energy, skin health and regular bowel movements – all of which influence how you feel and function.

Here's how to do it...

Aim for 1.5-2 litres of water per day, which is about 6-8 glasses, but you'll need more if you're active, breastfeeding, living in a hot climate, or eating a high-protein diet.

Start the day with a large glass of water before coffee or tea. This rehydrates you after sleep and gets digestion moving. Carry a reusable water bottle with you so you're reminded to sip throughout the day.

If plain water feels boring, try adding lemon slices, cucumber, berries or mint to enhance flavour naturally. Herbal teas and diluted fruit infusions also count towards your fluid intake, just steer clear of overly sweetened drinks and fizzy options that can irritate your gut.

It's not just about how much you drink, it's also when. Sip water consistently throughout the day rather than downing large amounts in one go, which your body can't fully absorb. Match your protein intake with mindful hydration, especially after higher-protein meals or shakes.

Signs you're not getting enough water? Fatigue, headaches, dry skin, sluggish digestion or strong-smelling urine can all be early indicators. Making this a habit supports your protein goals and every other system in your body.

Make it easy

Drink a glass of water with every meal and snack. Keep a refillable glass bottle handy and sip throughout the day.

4 tips for staying hydrated

Don't neglect your hydration – here's how to keep things in the front of your mind

Top tip	Why do it?
Start the day with water	Having a glass of water as soon as you wake up is an easy habit to get into, and will rehydrate your body after hours of sleep.
Carry a water bottle wherever you go	Invest in a decent-sized water bottle that you can keep in your work bag, gym bag and have within arm's reach throughout the day.
Add a slice of fruit or some herbs	If you're not keen on drinking plain water, add a slice of orange, a few sprigs of mint or some cucumber for a more interesting flavour.
Set reminders or use an app	Apps like Waterlogged or Hydro Coach remind you to drink water throughout the day. Or, set your own alarms on your phone or watch.

34.9g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Coconut and lime fish soup

Soups and broths help to top up your hydration levels

By Fern Green

Serves **2** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **15 mins**

- **350g white fish fillets, such as cod or haddock**
- **1 tbsp olive oil**
- **1 onion, peeled, finely chopped**
- **1 garlic clove, peeled, grated**
- **1 tbsp grated ginger**
- **1 tin of coconut milk**
- **150ml (½ cup) vegetable stock/bouillon**
- **2 tbsp fish sauce**
- **1 tbsp soy sauce**
- **finely grated zest and juice of 1 lime**
- **1 tbsp caster/granulated sugar**
- **a handful of cherry tomatoes, chopped**
- **2 handfuls of spinach, chopped**
- **lime juice and coriander (cilantro), for topping**

1 Cook the fish in the oven (200°C/Gas Mark 6) or air fryer (200°C/400°F), drizzled with olive oil for 7-10 minutes until slightly browning on top. Set aside.

2 Meanwhile, heat a little olive oil in a large frying pan over medium heat. Add the onions, garlic and ginger, and cook for 3-4 minutes until softened and fragrant. Stir in the tomatoes and spinach, and cook for 3 minutes until the spinach wilts and the tomatoes begin to break down.

3 Add the soy sauce, fish sauce, coconut milk, lime zest and juice, sugar, and vegetable stock. Simmer for 2-3 minutes, then gently nestle the cooked fish into the pan to warm through for another 2 minutes. Spoon into two bowls, squeeze over the lime juice and sprinkle over the coriander.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **470**, Fat **29g**, Saturates **16g**, Carbohydrate **18g**, Sugars **9g**, Fibre **3g**, Protein **34.9g**, Salt **3.5g**

Habit tracker

✓ **Today I...** Consumed at least 1.5 litres of water

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Granary toast with cottage cheese, poached eggs and chilli flakes

Lunch

Falafel with quinoa, salad, and tahini-yoghurt dressing

Dinner

Salmon fillet, baby potatoes, and green beans with cottage cheese

DAY 27

Today focus on rethinking breakfast

Cereal is an easy breakfast, but not always the right option. Here's what to go for instead

Cereal is quick and easy, but most traditional options are low in protein and high in sugar, setting you up for a mid-morning energy crash and sugar cravings. Starting the day with a protein-rich breakfast helps regulate blood sugar, manage hunger hormones, support energy and even improve focus and concentration throughout the day.

If breakfast is a habit you already have in place, all it takes is a swap – from refined, low-protein carbs to something that fuels you properly.

Here's how to do it...

Instead of cereal, try one of these options:

- Greek yoghurt (15-20g protein) with berries, seeds and a drizzle of nut butter.
- 3 scrambled or boiled eggs (about 18g protein) with sautéed spinach or avocado on gluten-free toast.
- Overnight oats made with chia seeds, protein powder and almond or soy milk.
- Cottage cheese with banana, cinnamon, and 1 tbsp of almond butter.
- Protein smoothie with yoghurt, nut butter, spinach and frozen berries.

If you still want something cereal-like, look for high-protein granola or muesli with at least 10g of protein per serving, and pair it with Greek yoghurt or a high-protein milk alternative.

Batch-prepping can make high-protein breakfasts just as easy as cereal. Prepare overnight oats or egg muffins the night before. Keep hard-boiled eggs or chia pudding in the fridge for grab-and-go mornings. Even protein pancakes or waffles can be batch-cooked and stored for the week ahead.

The key is starting with protein first, then layering on fibre, healthy fats, and whole food carbs. This way, breakfast becomes a tool to support your energy, metabolism and appetite all day.

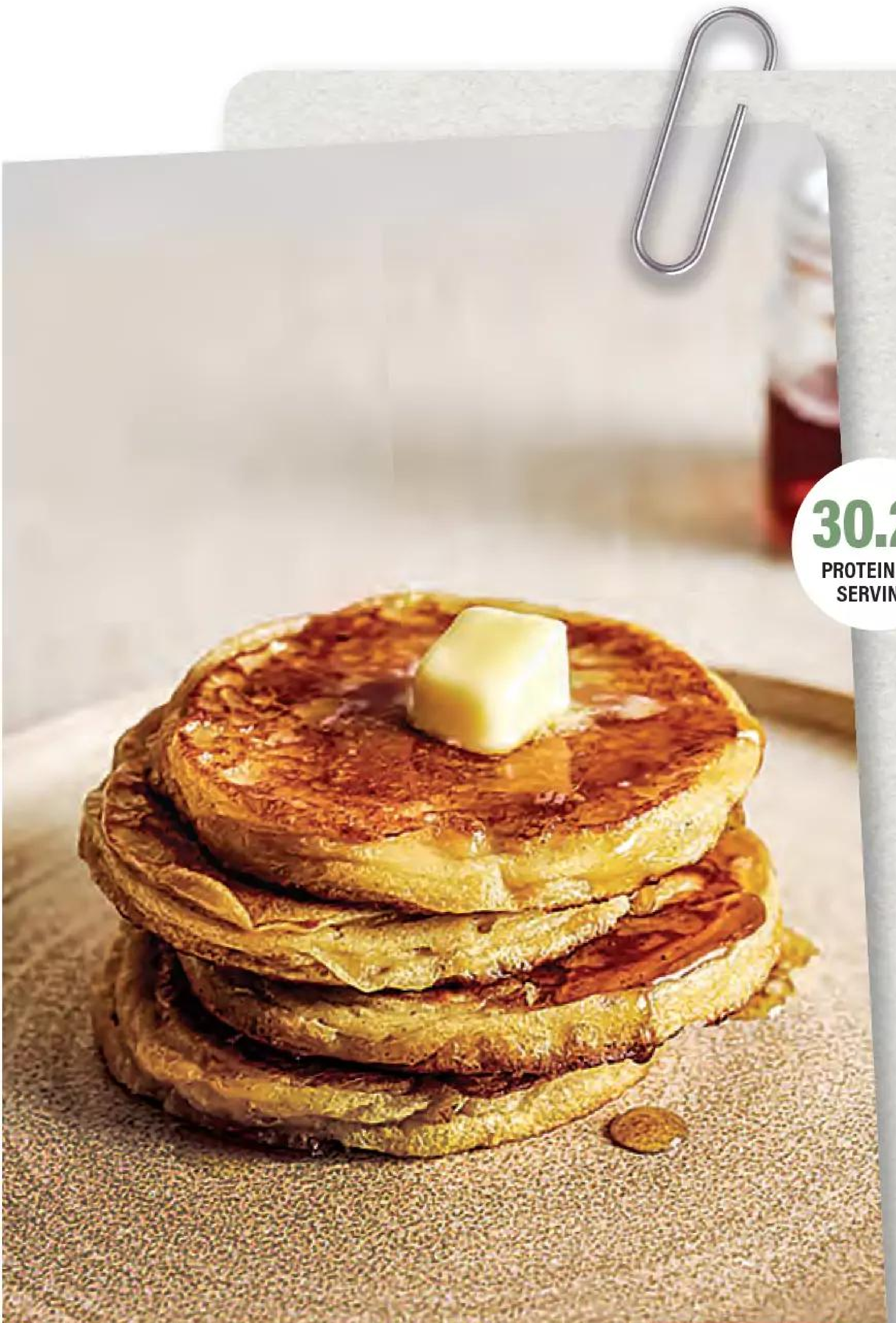
Make it easy

Ditch the sugary cereal. Prep high-protein breakfasts like eggs, overnight oats or yoghurt with seeds the night before so you have a quick, convenient option to pick up in the morning.

4 *high-protein* breakfast swaps

Switch up your morning routine with these easy high-protein breakfasts

Instead of this	...try this!
Cereal	Greek yoghurt with nuts, seeds or berries. Switching up the toppings will keep things interesting, and a drizzle of honey or sprinkle of cinnamon will give you the sweetness you're after.
Toast with jam	Avocado and eggs on toast. The avocado provides healthy fats and eggs are a great protein source.
Shop-bought smoothie	A homemade smoothie with nut butter or protein powder. It may seem like a faff, but it's a very quick way to avoid hidden sugars and additives.
Classic pancakes	Cottage cheese pancakes. Folding some cottage cheese into your pancake batter is a great way to squeeze in the extra protein. Top with fruit and you're good to go. Alternatively, use protein powder.


30.2g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Cottage cheese pancakes

Cottage cheese makes fluffy pancakes with 30g of protein

By Niall Kirkland

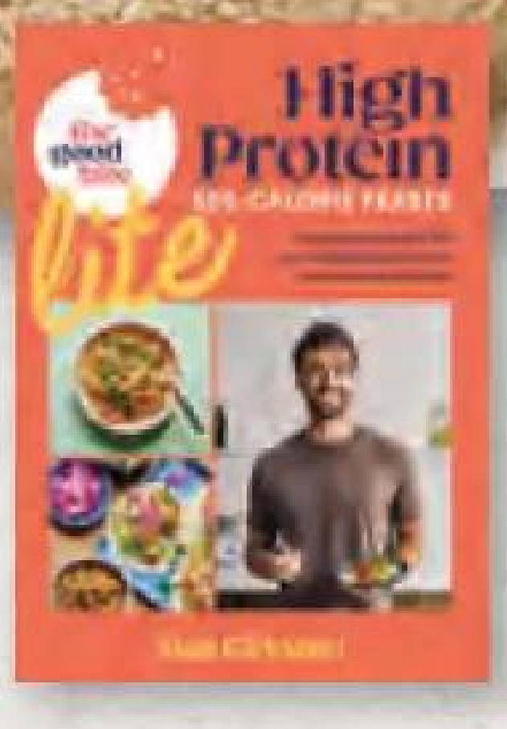
Serves **2** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **15 mins**

- **2 eggs**
- **225g (1 cup) low-fat cottage cheese**
- **a pinch of ground cinnamon**
- **½ tbsp maple syrup**
- **1 tsp vanilla extract**
- **1 tsp baking powder**
- **60g (½ cup) plain (all-purpose) flour**
- **20g (2½ tbsp) vanilla protein powder**
- **1 tbsp coconut oil, for frying**
- **2 tsp reduced-fat butter spread, 1 tsp per stack**
- **2 tsp maple syrup, 1 tsp per stack**

1. Put all the ingredients, except the oil, butter spread and syrup, in a blender and blend until combined and smooth. Leave the mixture to sit for 4-5 minutes.
2. The best way to cook these is using two non-stick pans and four 6-8cm (2½-3in) pancake/egg moulds, so you can cook four pancakes at a time in two batches. Heat half the coconut oil in each pan over medium heat. Swirl the oil to coat the pan, put the moulds in, then pour in the pancake mix and cook for 3-4 minutes.
3. When it starts bubbling on top, remove the moulds, then flip using a spatula. The pancakes should be golden with darker colouring on the surface. Cook for 3-4 minutes more until cooked through.
4. Serve immediately and top with the butter spread and maple syrup.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **360**, Fat **17g**, Saturates **9g**, Carbohydrate **24g**, Sugars **7g**, Fibre **1g**, Protein **30.2g**, Salt **0.9g**



Recipe taken from *The Good Bite Lite: 500-Calorie Feasts* by Niall Kirkland, published by Penguin Michael Joseph, £22.

Habit tracker

Today I... Swapped my breakfast cereal for a high protein alternative

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Granary toast with cottage cheese, poached eggs and chilli flakes

Lunch

Bean and lentil salad with cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and avocado

Dinner

Chickpea pasta with veg-loaded tomato sauce and cheese

DAY 28

Today focus on supercharging your salads

Make the most of a salad by packing it with protein to keep you feeling full for longer

Make it easy

Add tuna, chicken, salmon, tofu or eggs to your salad. Batch prep in jars so lunch is ready – and protein-packed – in the fridge for you to take to work. If you're struggling with supermarket sandwiches for lunch, this is a great option and you can batch make them and have a week's worth ready.

Salads have a healthy reputation, but let's be honest: many are just a pile of leaves with barely enough protein to keep you full past 3pm. If your salad leaves you grazing shortly after, it probably needs a protein upgrade. When you build salads intentionally, they can become nutrient-dense, high-protein meals that actually satisfy. With the right ingredients, your salad can deliver 20-30g of protein and keep you energised for hours.

Here's how to do it...

Start with a solid protein base: grilled chicken, tinned tuna, smoked salmon, boiled eggs, tofu, tempeh, beans or lentils. Make sure this element provides at least 20g of protein – don't be afraid to double up or combine proteins, like beans and eggs or tuna and quinoa.

Next, layer in a variety of colourful vegetables for fibre and nutrients: rocket, spinach, cucumbers, peppers, cherry tomatoes, grated carrot, or shredded cabbage all work well.

Add protein-rich extras like roasted chickpeas, edamame, quinoa, cheese cubes, or a sprinkle of nuts and seeds for texture and extra satiety.

Top it off with a creamy or zesty dressing – Greek yoghurt-based sauces, tahini, lemon and olive oil, or houmous thinned with water are all great choices.

Want a warm version? Build a grain bowl: sautéed greens, roasted veg, lentils and grilled tofu or fish served over brown rice or buckwheat, finished with your favourite dressing.

To save time, batch prep salads in jars or containers. Put the dressing at the base, then add firmer ingredients like quinoa or beans, and keep leafy greens at the top to stay crisp until serving. A well-balanced salad isn't just nutritious, it's functional fuel that keeps you full and focused.

4 *easy ways* to pack protein into your salad

Next time you make a salad, try these simple additions for a protein boost

Top tip	The benefits
Add chicken or turkey breast (30g of protein per 100g serving)	Roast chicken or turkey will add great texture and flavour, as well as being a lean protein source. They're both versatile meats that taste great with different flavour profiles.
Toss in some beans or lentils (9g of protein per 100g serving)	Bulk out your salad by throwing in some cooked beans or lentils for extra protein that will help you stay full for longer. This works well in both cold and warm salads.
Add a boiled egg (13g of protein per 100g serving, 2 large eggs)	Eggs are a great source of protein and healthy fats. Boil an egg or two, slice them up and toss them into your salad – easy!
Top with feta (14g of protein per 100g serving)	Feta cheese adds a salty tang to salads, as well as an extra helping of protein. Crumble it over the top before serving.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Zesty south-west chicken salad

Zingy flavours create a chicken salad you'll want to make again

By Danielle Lima

Serves **4** | Prep **20 mins** | Cook **15 mins**

49g PROTEIN PER SERVING

HIGH-PROTEIN
MACROS
made easy
DANIELLE LIMA

Recipe taken from *High-Protein Macros Made Easy* by Danielle Lima, photos by Sierra Ashleigh Photography, published by Page Street Publishing, £19.99.

For the taco seasoning

- 1 tsp each of salt, onion powder, garlic powder
- 2 tsp paprika
- 1 tbsp chilli powder
- 1½ tbsp cumin
- 60ml (¼ cup) lime juice
- 2 tsp honey
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 80ml (⅓ cup) extra-virgin olive oil

For the chicken

- 675g boneless, skinless chicken breast, cubed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tin of sweetcorn, drained or fresh corn grilled and cut off the cob
- 170g (1 cup) black beans, drained, rinsed

For the dressing

- 30g fresh coriander (cilantro)
- 1 garlic clove

For the salad

- 300g chopped romaine lettuce (about 3 heads)
- 170g (1 cup) cherry tomatoes, halved
- 80g (½ cup) red onion, finely chopped
- 60g (½ cup) Cotija or feta cheese, crumbled
- fresh cracked pepper

1. Add the seasoning ingredients to a small mixing bowl. Reserve 1½ tbsp for the chicken, save the rest for later.
2. Add the chicken to a large mixing bowl with ½ tbsp olive oil and the reserved 1½ tbsp of seasoning. Stir to mix and evenly coat the chicken.
3. Heat a large frying pan over medium heat and add the remaining olive oil. Once hot, add the chicken in a single layer and sear for 4 minutes without touching it. Flip and sear the chicken for 3-4 minutes more, until cooked through and no longer pink. Remove and set aside.
4. Add the corn to the same pan and sear for 3-5 minutes to get it charred. Remove from the heat and add to the chicken along with the black beans.
5. In a blender or food processor, combine the dressing ingredients and 60ml (¼ cup) water. Blend to combine, leaving some chunks of coriander. Set the dressing aside.
6. In a large bowl, combine the salad ingredients and the chicken mixture, then top with the dressing. Mix everything well. Top with lots of fresh cracked pepper.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **529**, Fat **30g**, Saturates **6.9g**, Carbohydrate **26.3g**, Sugars **7.9g**, Fibre **5.1g**, Protein **48.9g**, Salt **2.3g**

Habit tracker

Today I... Supercharged my salad

Do this... **REGULARLY**

End of week reflection

The habit I enjoyed most this week was...

My favourite meal this week was...

The habit I think benefited me most was...

My biggest takeaway from this week is...

The habit I struggled with most was...

My new favourite ingredient is...

Overall this week my energy has been...

Average protein amount per day:

Amount of water I drank each day:

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Greek yoghurt with berries, chia seeds and granola

Lunch

Tuna niçoise-style salad (tuna, egg, potatoes, green beans, olives)

Dinner

Tofu stir-fry with veg, edamame and soy sauce over brown rice

DAY
29

Today focus on preparing to eat out

You're now used to working out your protein at home, but what happens if you go out?

Eating out doesn't have to derail your protein goals. In fact, many restaurants offer meals that can help you hit your target, if you know what to look for. With a bit of awareness and a few simple tweaks, you can enjoy eating at a restaurant without sacrificing nutrition, or ending up with a carb-heavy, low-protein meal that leaves you feeling hungry soon after.

Here's how to do it...

Start by scanning the menu for protein-rich options. Look for meals centred around lean meat, fish, eggs, legumes or tofu. Grilled fish dishes, mixed grills, seafood platters, salads with chicken or beans, and omelettes are often high in protein and easy to customise.

Avoid meals that are mostly bread, pasta or fries unless you can pair them with a clear protein source. For example, a sandwich with chicken, tuna or egg can work well – especially if you ask for extra filling. Similarly, a pasta dish can be made more balanced with added prawns, chicken or lentils.

Don't be afraid to make substitutions. Most restaurants are happy to swap chips for vegetables, or add extra eggs, beans or protein to a dish. You can also order a side of grilled chicken or tofu to boost the overall protein count of your meal.

If you're being mindful of your portion control too, things are easier when you lead with protein – eat the protein and vegetables first, then assess if you still want all of the carbs.

Planning ahead can also help. If you know where you're going, check the menu online and decide what to order in advance. This reduces on-the-spot decisions and helps you make a choice that aligns with your goals.

Make it easy

Scan menus for meals with beef, chicken, fish, tofu or beans. Order extra protein or veg and skip the low-protein fillers. But if all else fails, remember it's just one meal and you can get back to normal tomorrow.

Top tips for hitting protein goals when eating out

Here's what to look out for on the menu...

Top tip	How to do it
Go for protein-centred meals	Select meals where the protein is the centrepiece – think grilled chicken, steak or fish dishes.
Don't skip the sides	Check out the side dishes to see if they boast extra protein. Edamame, bean salads or chicken strips could help you hit your goals.
Watch out for sauces and coatings	Even if dishes are protein-centred, they may be battered or deep-fried. Grilled, roasted, poached or steamed options will boost protein without adding loads of fats.
Scan menus for protein add-ons	Often, restaurants give you the option to add extra chicken, tofu or eggs to salads, noodle dishes and more.

33.8g PROTEIN PER SERVING

RECIPE OF THE DAY

Pork tonkatsu

This is a delicious treat and scores big on the protein

By Fern Green

Serves **2** | Prep **8 mins** | Cook **12 mins**

- **2 pork loin steaks**
- **60g (½ cup) plain flour**
- **1 free-range egg, whisked**
- **60g (1 cup) panko breadcrumbs**
- **olive oil spray**
- **cooked rice and grated cabbage, to serve**

For the tonkatsu sauce

- **2 tbsp soy sauce**
- **3 tbsp Worcestershire sauce**
- **4 tbsp ketchup**
- **1 tbsp mirin**
- **1 tbsp granulated sugar**
- **½ tsp Dijon mustard**
- **salt and ground black pepper**

1. Flatten the steaks using a tenderiser or rolling pin to about 1.5cm (¾in). Make three or four cuts around the edge on the fat so it doesn't curl up when cooking. Season both sides.
2. Place the flour, eggs and panko in separate bowls, then coat the pork in that order. Once coated, season and spray with olive oil. Cook for 12 minutes in an air fryer at 180°C/360°F. (Or, pan fry in a thin layer of olive oil over medium heat for 4-5 minutes per side.)
3. Meanwhile, for the sauce, combine the ingredients in a saucepan to warm up. Once bubbling, pour into a small bowl.
4. Once the pork is golden and crispy, slice into strips and serve with grated cabbage, rice and a drizzle of hot tonkatsu sauce.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **565**, Fat **17g**, Saturates **5.6g**, Carbohydrate **64g**, Sugars **18g**, Fibre **3g**, Protein **33.8g**, Salt **3g**

Habit tracker

☑ **Today I...** Planned ahead for eating out

Do this... **REGULARLY**

How I feel today Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

		Notes
Energy	☆☆☆☆☆	
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆	
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆	
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆	
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆	
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆	
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆	
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆	
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆	

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

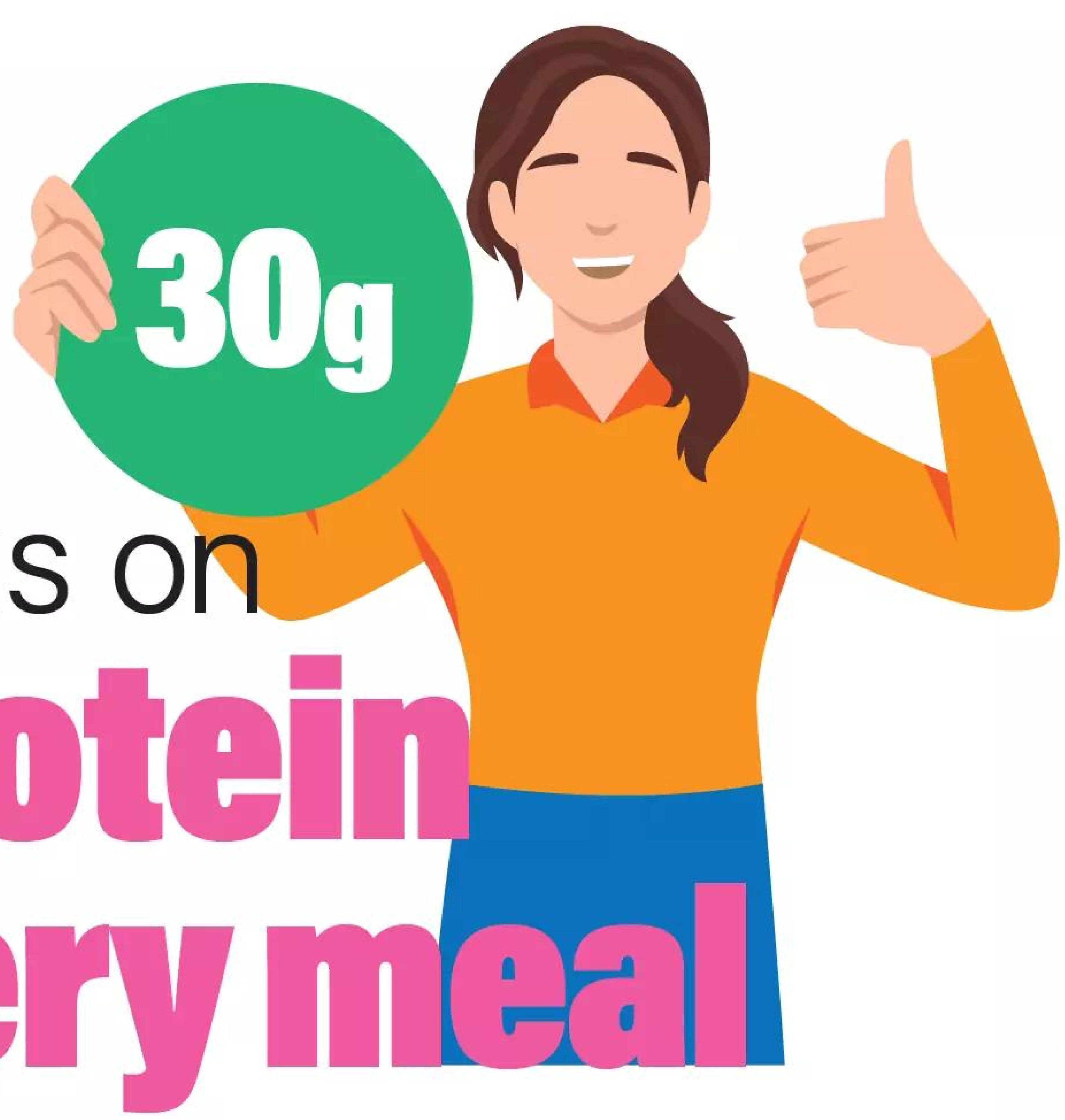
Protein smoothie (protein powder, banana, almond milk, peanut butter, Greek yoghurt)

Lunch

High-protein wrap with grilled chicken, houmous and salad

Dinner

Chickpea and spinach curry with a scoop of Greek yoghurt and brown rice



DAY 30

Today focus on 30g protein for every meal

You started the month with one 30g protein meal, now you can do it for all your meals!

If you've been following these habits, you've likely increased your protein intake without overhauling your entire routine. Now it's time to level up: aim for 30g of protein per meal, consistently. This habit supports muscle repair, energy, hormone function and satiety, especially as we age.

Research shows that evenly distributing protein across meals (rather than loading up at dinner) leads to better muscle maintenance, blood sugar control and hunger regulation. Think of 30g per meal as the gold standard.

Here's how to do it...

Use everything that you've learned: start with a solid protein base (such as 100-150g cooked meat, 2 eggs and yoghurt, tofu or lentils), and layer in supportive foods such as seeds, beans, grains, dairy or protein powder.

Build meals ahead of time using a meal planner or template. Breakfast might be eggs with smoked salmon or protein oats with nut butter. Lunch could be tuna and quinoa salad, or tofu and brown rice stir-fry. Dinner might be grilled fish with sweet potato and steamed greens.

You don't have to track every day, but doing a quick count can help you get a feel for what 30g looks like. Use an app or food label the first few times to check.

If you're still falling short, review your daily patterns: are you skipping breakfast? Do you tend to rely on quick snacks instead of meals? Lean into batch-cooked protein bases and leftovers in order to help you hit your target consistently.

Make it easy

Batch cooking and regularly repeating meals takes the thinking out of food prep and means that you'll instinctively know you're getting the right protein without having to spend ages calculating them. We've given you a handy chart on page 84 to get you started.

Go-to meals to hit 30g of protein

Hitting 30g doesn't need to be complicated – here are some quick and easy meal ideas

On the menu	How the protein adds up
Breakfast: Cottage cheese, smoked salmon and egg on toast	2 slices of wholegrain toast will give you a base 8g of protein. Add 3 tbsp cottage cheese (6g), 2 poached eggs (12g), 40g smoked salmon (8g) and a handful of baby spinach. Finish with a crack of black pepper.
Lunch: Protein-packed chicken/turkey wrap	A large high-protein wrap is about 8g. Add 100g cooked chicken or turkey breast (30g), 2 tbsp houmous (3g) and some mixed salad for crunch and you'll be well on your way.
Dinner: Tuna pasta power bowl	Mix a tin of tuna, which has 25g of protein, with 75g of cooked wholewheat pasta (7g). Add a handful of spinach, some roasted cherry tomatoes and a spoonful of Greek yoghurt (3g). Season well and add a squeeze of lemon.

RECIPE OF THE DAY

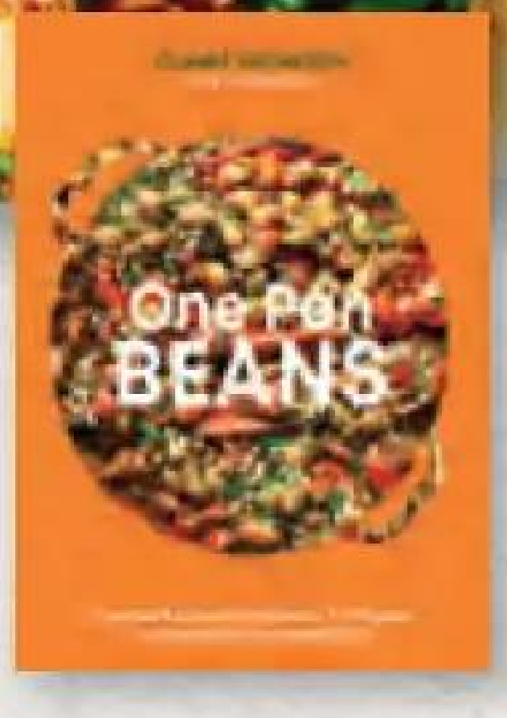
Pot-roast chicken with chickpeas

This one-pot chicken dish will help you hit 30g of protein with ease

By Claire Thomson

Serves **4** | Prep **10 mins** | Cook **1 hr**

50g PROTEIN PER SERVING



Recipe taken from *One Pan Beans* by Claire Thomson, photography by Sam Folan, published by Quadrille, £20.

- **1 medium whole chicken**
- **3 tbsp olive oil**
- **½ tsp baharat (optional)**
- **2 onions, thinly sliced**
- **600ml (2½ cups) hot chicken stock or boiling water**
- **4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced**
- **4 bay leaves**
- **1 unwaxed lemon, ½ very thinly sliced**
- **2 cinnamon sticks**
- **8 whole allspice berries**
- **6 green cardamom pods, lightly crushed**
- **200g (1 cup) tinned or fresh chopped tomatoes**
- **about 250g (1½ cups) drained cooked or tinned chickpeas (garbanzos)**
- **a small bunch of soft herbs, such as parsley, dill, coriander (cilantro), oregano, marjoram, mint or chives, roughly chopped**
- **salt and freshly ground black pepper**

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4.
2. Rub the chicken with 1 tbsp of olive oil, ½ tsp salt, some pepper and the baharat (if using) and place in a casserole or ovenproof dish on top of the onions. Pour over the remaining olive oil and half the stock. Bake for 20-30 minutes until beginning to colour.
3. Remove the chicken from the dish and set aside on a plate.
4. Stir the garlic, bay leaves, lemon slices and whole spices into the dish, then add the tomatoes, chickpeas and the remaining chicken stock. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
5. Make a well in the middle of the chickpea mixture and place the chicken in it. Cover with the lid or foil and return to the oven. Cook for 30-45 minutes until the chicken is cooked and the sauce is rich and thick.
6. Stir the juice of the remaining lemon half, half the herbs and salt and pepper to taste into the chickpea mixture. Allow to rest for 10 minutes. Carve or joint the chicken and serve on top of the chickpeas, topped with the remaining herbs.

PER SERVING:

Calories: **540**, Fat **31g**, Saturates **7g**, Carbohydrate **18g**, Sugars **5g**, Fibre **4g**, Protein **50g**, Salt **1.2g**

Habit tracker

☐ **Today I...** Consumed 30g protein at every meal

Do this... **EVERY DAY**

How I feel today

Check in with how your body is feeling on a scale of 1-5

Energy	☆☆☆☆☆
Mood	☆☆☆☆☆
Hunger	☆☆☆☆☆
Muscle aches	☆☆☆☆☆
Digestive health	☆☆☆☆☆
Skin	☆☆☆☆☆
Brain fog	☆☆☆☆☆
Stress	☆☆☆☆☆
Sleep	☆☆☆☆☆

Notes

Keep it simple

MENU OF THE DAY

Breakfast

Protein pancakes with Greek yoghurt and berries

Lunch

Chicken and quinoa salad with spinach, feta and roasted veg

Dinner

King prawn skewers with baby potatoes and roasted vegetables

The next 30 DAYS

It's time to apply everything you've learned over the last 30 days to the next 30 days and beyond. This daily checklist will help you keep track of the key habits you adopted over the last month – and there's space to add at least one of your own too.

WEEK 5/6	Day 31	Day 32	Day 33	Day 34	Day 35	Day 36	Day 37
Track your protein intake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat a protein-rich breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hit 20-30g protein for every meal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat whole food snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Batch cook meals (once a week)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drink 2 litres of water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you rate your energy levels this week? ☆☆☆☆☆

WEEK 6/7	Day 38	Day 39	Day 40	Day 41	Day 42	Day 43	Day 44
Track your protein intake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat a protein-rich breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hit 20-30g protein for every meal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat whole food snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Batch cook meals (once a week)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drink 2 litres of water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you rate your energy levels this week? ☆☆☆☆☆

WEEK 7/8	Day 45	Day 46	Day 47	Day 48	Day 49	Day 50	Day 51
Track your protein intake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat a protein-rich breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hit 20-30g protein for every meal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat whole food snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Batch cook meals (once a week)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drink 2 litres of water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you rate your energy levels this week? ☆☆☆☆☆

WEEK 8/9	Day 52	Day 53	Day 54	Day 55	Day 56	Day 57	Day 58
Track your protein intake	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat a protein-rich breakfast	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hit 20-30g protein for every meal	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Eat whole food snacks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Batch cook meals (once a week)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Drink 2 litres of water	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How would you rate your energy levels this week? ☆☆☆☆☆

WEEK 9	Day 59	Day 60
Track your protein intake	☐	☐
Eat a protein-rich breakfast	☐	☐
Hit 20-30g protein for every meal	☐	☐
Eat whole food snacks	☐	☐
Batch cook meals (once a week)	☐	☐
Drink 2 litres of water	☐	☐
	☐	☐

How was your energy this week? ☆☆☆☆☆

End of month reflection

The habit I think benefited me most was...

The habit I struggled with most was...

Overall this month my health has been...

My biggest takeaway from this month is...

Here to help your health journey...

30 DAYS TO Better Gut Health
NEW!
Your day-by-day guide to healing & nourishing your body
6 SIGNS OF AN UNHEALTHY GUT
TRANSFORM YOUR BODY FROM THE INSIDE-OUT
Including 30 GUT-FRIENDLY RECIPES

TRY MEAT-FREE THIS MONTH
WIN!
VeganFood & Living
FAST & FRESH!
82+ PLANT-BASED RECIPES & IDEAS
NO-FUSS NUTRITION

NEW!
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Anti-inflammatory
75 healthy RECIPES
Heal your body
TOP 12 INGREDIENTS TO FIGHT INFLAMMATION • DISCOVER THE FOODS TO AVOID

Pinch of Nom magazine
30 DELICIOUS slimming-friendly RECIPES
NEW OFFICIAL MAG!
BEHIND THE SCENES AT Pinch of Nom HQ

NEW!
COOKBOOK
Gluten-Free
The secret to loving your GF lifestyle
75 SENSATIONAL NEW RECIPES
Make anything gluten-free
Create classic dishes from morning to night...

COOKBOOK
AirFryer
How to cook almost anything in your air fryer
75 QUICK & EASY RECIPES
Healthy 30-minute meals
Create speedy dishes with big flavours

Your complete guide to living a healthier, happier and more active life
How to LIVE LONGER and better
SLOW DOWN AGEING
123 easy wins to get you started
Boost your brain

30 DAYS TO Anti-Inflammatory Diet
NEW!
BUILD HEALTHY NEW HABITS to ease your inflammation
Including 30 ANTI-INFLAMMATORY RECIPES

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"MY FIRST MARATHON!"
Women's Running
GOING PLACES
GUT HEALTH
RUN FURTHER
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The science behind the habits

Now that we're equipped with 30 new habits to ensure we get enough protein, let's go into more detail about the foods that can help us and how to make an action plan...

Protein tracking journal 84
Protein meal planning on a budget 88
What are macronutrients? 92
Plant-based protein 96
Protein shopping guide 100
Protein and fitness 104
Protein and ageing 109
Protein and gut health 112

YOUR PROTEIN TRACKER

To make it easier for you to keep track of your favourite protein-rich meals, we've put together a tracker for you.

We've included all the info you might want to track for different dietary requirements, but if protein is the only thing that's important to you, just leave the other columns blank.

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

MEAL

INGREDIENT / AMOUNT	PROTEIN	CALORIES	FAT	SAT FAT	SUGAR	FIBRE	CARBS

High-protein meal planning on a budget

Words: Rob Hobson

Changing your diet may sound expensive, but with some careful planning you can easily avoid going over budget

Protein can get pricey if you're not careful, but you don't need to live on chicken breasts and expensive protein powders to get everything your body needs. Whether you're feeding a family, training hard, or simply trying to eat well without draining your bank account, there are lots of clever ways to build high-protein meals without overspending on your weekly food bill.

4 QUICK TIPS

BUDGET MEAL PREPPING

- ✓ Cook once, eat twice (or more).
- ✓ Portion meals straight into containers for grab-and-go convenience.
- ✓ Use the same base protein in different dishes like chicken curry, chicken wrap or on a jacket potato.
- ✓ Keep a 'use-up drawer' in the fridge for leftovers that need eating.

What are the best sources of protein on a budget?

You're probably already eating some of the best-value proteins without even realising it. These foods are often dried, tinned, jarred or frozen, each of which are equally as beneficial.

Here are a few of the most valuable proteins, all based on average UK prices:

– **Eggs:** 13g protein per two medium eggs. For around 17p per egg, these are a complete protein, very versatile and quick to cook.

– **Lentils (dried):** 8g protein per 100g when cooked – around 25p per serving. They're not just high in protein but are a great source of fibre and iron.

– **Tinned tuna:** 24g protein per 145g tin – around 62p. This tinned fish is a versatile protein that makes it easy to create simple meals.

– **Frozen chicken portions (thighs and drumsticks):** 30g protein per 150g cooked. At £4 for a 2kg bag, that's 30p a serving – much cheaper than chicken breast and more flavoursome as well.

– **Frozen edamame beans:** 13g protein per 100g. These are around £2.50 per 500g bag and make a very convenient complete plant protein.

– **Cottage cheese:** 11g protein per 100g – around 53p a serving if you spend £1.60 on a 300g tub. It's an excellent high protein snack or topping for toast or jacket potatoes.

Day
Day
Day
Day
Day

MEAL PLAN
1
2
3
4
5

HIGH-PROTEIN MEALS *on a budget*

It's easy to combine budget proteins with other whole foods to create a wallet friendly meal.

BREAKFASTS

○ **Peanut butter oats with chia seeds** (12g protein, 35p)

○ **Scrambled eggs on wholemeal seeded toast** (18g protein, 60p)

○ **Porridge with milk and pumpkin seeds** (15g protein, 45p)

LUNCHES

○ **Lentil and veg soup with wholemeal seeded bread** (20g protein, 75p)

○ **Tuna pasta salad** (25g protein, £1.20)

○ **Chickpea and avocado wrap** (18g protein, £1.20)

DINNERS

○ **Chicken and veg stir-fry with brown rice** (35g protein, £1.80)

○ **Egg and edamame fried rice** (27g protein, £1.30)

○ **Bean chilli with quinoa** (22g protein, £1)

SNACKS

○ **Cottage cheese with sliced tomato** (12g protein, 60p)

○ **Houmous with carrot sticks** (8g protein, 40p)

○ **Hard-boiled egg** (6.5g protein, 17p)

How can batch cooking save you time and money?

Batch cooking saves time, energy and money, especially when you centre your meals around versatile proteins. Here are a few ways to make it work:

– Combine a batch of **tinned lentils and mixed beans** to keep in the fridge that you can use in chilli, curry, soup, or salads.
– Roast a tray of **chicken thighs** with herbs and olive oil that you can then use in wraps, rice bowls, or shredded into pasta.
– Make a **large frittata** with eggs, potatoes, spinach and frozen peas. Eat hot or cold across several meals as the frittata will keep for a few days in the fridge.
– Cook grains like **quinoa or brown rice** in bulk and pair with different proteins and dressings each day.

Aim to build two or three protein bases that can stretch across multiple meals with different flavours. It keeps things interesting without extra effort.

MEAL

Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	

What can you do with leftovers from preparing meals?

Leftovers are your secret weapon for protein planning. Got half a tin of chickpeas? Blend into houmous. A cold chicken thigh? Shred into a stir-fry or soup. Even cooked quinoa can become tomorrow's veggie burger base or a nice addition to porridge to boost the protein content.

Don't be afraid to freestyle for added protein. Here are some ideas:

- **Wraps:** Add leftover protein and whatever veg you've got.
- **Omelettes:** Throw in yesterday's roasted veg or pulses.
- **Soups and stews:** Bulk up with beans, grains or chopped meat for added texture and protein.

A little creativity goes a long way, and this is a good way to keep your food waste and bills down.

How can you avoid waste and overspending?

Planning ahead is where the real savings happen. Try these steps:

- **Plan 3-4 main meals per week using overlapping ingredients.** For example, buy one pack of lentils to use in a soup, shepherd's pie and curry.
- **Shop your kitchen first.** Got a tin of beans lurking in the back of a cupboard? Build a meal around it.
- **Freeze leftovers in single portions.** Label and date them as they are great for busy days, last-minute lunches or hungry teens hanging off the fridge door looking for something to snack on.
- **Use your freezer wisely.** Frozen veg, fish and meat are cheaper, last longer, and reduce waste.

It's also a good idea to avoid shopping when you are hungry as this can lead to impulse-buying foods that you don't need and possibly forgetting the ones that are key to your weekly meal plan.

High-protein eating doesn't have to mean spending more. With a little planning, some savvy swaps, and smart shopping habits, you can get everything your body needs without having to drain your budget. Whether you're training, recovering, or just trying to eat well for less, there's always a way to make protein work for you.

Smart shopping strategies

Eating high protein on a budget isn't about cutting corners, but shopping smart. Here are the top strategies I give to clients:

GO WITH FROZEN Frozen fish, chicken, vegetables and even beans are often cheaper than fresh. They're picked at peak ripeness and reduce waste since you can portion out what you need.

CHOOSE OWN BRANDS Supermarket own-label pulses, dairy, tinned fish and grains are often half the price of branded options containing the same nutritional value.

BULK BUY STAPLES Buying staples like lentils, oats, quinoa or tinned beans in bulk can save money in the long run, especially if you store them properly. The same goes for large tubs of natural yoghurt or big blocks of cheese (if dairy is part of your diet).

CHEAPER CUTS AND PLANT PROTEINS Swap steak for chicken thighs or turkey mince. Use lentils or beans to stretch out meat-based meals like halving the beef mince in your Bolognese and swapping for lentils

SHOP AROUND Try discount supermarkets like Aldi or Lidl for tinned fish, eggs and frozen protein options. You'll often find good-quality ingredients at a fraction of the price. You can also look out for yellow sticker foods for offers on protein that you can freeze when you get home.

USE APPS AND YOUR LOYALTY POINTS Too Good To Go, Olio, and store loyalty cards can knock even more off your weekly food bill.

What are macronutrients?

Words: Charlie Watson

To truly harness the power of protein, we need to understand how the other two macronutrients function and how to strike the right balance for our bodies

Macronutrients are nutrients that provide us with energy that enables our bodies to function optimally, and supports its structure and systems. The three main macronutrients in our diet are carbohydrates, protein and fat. They each add to your caloric total – 4 kcals per gram of protein and carbohydrate and 9 calories per gram of fat.

No single macronutrient is more important than the others, we need a balance of the three for the body to perform efficiently. A healthy diet should not exclude or eliminate any macronutrient. Each one serves a different metabolic function within the body. Carbohydrates and fat are predominantly used for energy while protein is used to build muscle and hormones.

While there is no consensus among scientists and health professionals about the exact optimal breakdown of a healthy diet, current recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Commission on Nutrition (SACN) are that the UK average population make up 50 per cent of their dietary energy from carbohydrates. While there is no suggestion from SACN on protein intake, it is recommended that up to 35 per cent of total dietary calories are from fat (no more than 10 per cent from saturated fat). However, getting an actual calorie or grams breakdown of each macronutrient is specific to each individual.

PROTEIN

A brief recap on proteins. Proteins are made up of chains of amino acids, known as chemical 'building blocks'. Our body uses these amino acids for a number of essential functions such as brain development, production of hormones, bone health, muscle growth and repair.

The human body needs 22 amino acids to function optimally, including nine 'essential' amino acids that can't be made by the body and therefore need to be consumed as part of our diet. Animal derived proteins contain all of these essential amino acids, while only a few plant-based sources contain all nine. Combining complementary plant source proteins like rice and beans enables you to get enough of each essential amino acid to be considered a complete protein.

The 'recommended daily allowance' (RDA) for the general population is 0.75-0.8g protein per kg bodyweight, but those who exercise regularly have higher requirements.

Unlike carbohydrates and fat, protein is not usually used for energy in the body. Therefore alongside adequate protein intake to support bodily functions, we need to ensure we are eating enough carbohydrates and fat to help build and preserve lean muscle mass.

CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates are protein-sparing, meaning that if we eat enough carbohydrates it prevents the body from burning protein from dietary or muscular sources for energy. Therefore, eating enough carbohydrates as part of a balanced diet allows our dietary protein to be used for other important processes within the body, including muscle protein synthesis.

Carbohydrates are the body's preferred and main source of energy. Carbohydrates include starches – such as wheat, rice, barley, oats and potatoes; fibre – such as fruits, vegetables and legumes; and sugars.

The body breaks down carbohydrates into simple sugar molecules that enter the bloodstream and fuel your cells. Glucose is then converted into energy in the form of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), which powers a wide range of bodily functions, including protein synthesis. Glucose that isn't used straight away gets stored in our muscles and liver as glycogen to use as energy when needed, for example during exercise.

As well as providing energy, carbohydrates can help build and preserve lean muscle mass.

According to the NHS Eatwell plate, we should be getting about a third of our diet made up of fruits and vegetables, about a third from starchy carbohydrates, while the other third comes from protein and dairy or dairy alternatives.

There are two types of carbohydrates; simple and complex. These carbohydrates are broken down at different rates by the body. Sugar is a simple carbohydrate and is broken down more quickly than starchy carbohydrates and fibres. Sugar is found naturally in fruit, milk or added to food and drinks such as baked goods, breakfast cereals and sweetened drinks.

Complex carbohydrates, including wholegrains, beans, fruits and veggies have more nutrients and fibre than simple carbohydrates. They take longer for your body to digest and absorb, which can help you feel satiated.

For a healthy, balanced diet, we want to be opting for most of our carbohydrates to be coming from (or dietary sources with) a combination of complex and simple carbs, such as fruit, which contains fructose, a simple carbohydrate. Carbohydrates that are found naturally in plants are known as dietary fibre that reduces the risk of disease, helps keep our digestive system healthy and can help prevent constipation. These are found in wholegrains, nuts, seeds, pulses, fruit and vegetables. It's recommended that adults consume 30g of dietary fibre per day, although most adults in the UK fall short of this.

If we are looking at a rough guide, the NHS recommends that the average man needs 2,500kcals per day while the average woman requires 2,000kcals per day (but bear in mind that this does not take weight, height or activity level into account). If someone was consuming 50 per cent of their dietary intake from carbohydrates this would be about 1,250kcals or 312g carbs for a male or 1,000kcals or 250g carbs for a female. When we look at this as a carb:protein ratio, assuming that 30-35 per cent of dietary calories are from fat, then it would be a 5:2 ratio of carbs to protein (or around 100g protein for women or 125g protein for men).

FATS

As well as providing a dietary energy source alongside carbohydrates, fats play a key role in supporting protein function in a number of ways including building cell membranes, which regulate what enters and exits the cells and is essential for protein function. Fats help proteins maintain both their shape and function, as well as participating in the transportation of proteins within the body.

Fats provide omega-3 and omega-6 essential fatty acids, key for keeping our nervous system and brain healthy, and are required for protein synthesis and immune responses. Additionally, fats help the body absorb fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K).

Lipoproteins are particles made up of protein and fat that carry cholesterol through your bloodstream to your cells. These are made up of 'good' cholesterol (LDL – low-density lipoproteins) and 'bad' cholesterol (HDL – high-density lipoproteins).

There are two main types of fat: saturated and unsaturated fats. Many foods contain both, but they are classed by whichever is present in the highest proportion.

Saturated fats are mainly found in animal products, such as meat, butter and cheese, as well as products made with these, such as pastries and cakes. There are also some plant-based saturated fats, including cocoa butter, coconut oil and palm oil.

Unsaturated fats are most commonly found in plant sources like

avocado, olives, nuts and seeds, and are split into polyunsaturated, such as corn oils, sesame, soy, and monounsaturated, such as olive and rapeseed oils.

Omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids are polyunsaturated fats that can be made by the body, but are also a vital part of our diet. Current guidelines are to include two portions of fish per week into your diet, one of which should be oily fish. Plant sources of omega 3 and 6 include walnuts and leafy vegetables.

Trans fats are mostly industrially manufactured and designed to prolong the shelf life of products such as biscuits, cakes, margarine and fast food. UK food manufacturers are being encouraged to reduce the amount of trans fat added to food due to their associated negative health risks. Current guidance from the World Health Organisation is for us to consume less than 1 per cent of our total caloric intake from trans fats.

Ideally, most of your fat intake would be from unsaturated fats – look for food labels on products with green or orange reference to fat content.

A higher protein diet would have different macronutrient breakdown, starting with 25-30 per cent protein, 40-45 per cent carbohydrates and up to 30 per cent fat. This should work out about 1.4-1.5g per kg bodyweight protein, which is in line with recommendations for those with increased exercise levels and athletic performance goals.

TOP MACRONUTRIENT MYTHS

5 macro myths & mistakes

"Low fat is the healthier option."

Lower fat might sound healthier, and often these products do have fewer calories, but low-fat products may also contain higher sugar and sodium content to help replace the flavour that fat gives. It may also keep you less satiated than a full-fat option, leading you to consume more calories.

Yoplait
Thick & Creamy
Low fat Yogurt
Strawberry Banana

"Carbs cause weight gain."

Low-carb diets like Atkins were all the rage a few years ago, and yes, some people saw success by following these, but any drop in calories and processed foods would see the same. Carbohydrates are a vital food group providing essential nutrients, fibre and energy for the body.

"Unrefined sugar is healthier."

Whether you're using honey, maple syrup, coconut sugar or pure white cane sugar, sugar is sugar. Although unrefined sugars do tend to have higher nutrient values with vitamins and minerals not found in refined versions, whichever form you use contributes to your daily sugar intake.

"Protein is more important than carbohydrates to promote weight loss/muscle gain."

While protein intake is crucial to grow and repair muscle, if this is consumed at the expense of carbohydrate, then dietary protein will not be available to utilise for muscle protein synthesis. Protein needs to be consumed alongside carbohydrate (and fat) for optimal health, as well as both weight loss and athletic goals.

"Gluten free carbs are better for you."

Unless you are coeliac or have a gluten intolerance there is no need to choose gluten-free options. Gluten is the protein found in wheat, rye and barley and contains essential B vitamins and fibre. Often, when removing gluten, manufacturers will replace it with extra salt, sugar or refined starches to improve texture and flavour, making these sometimes less nutritious than their gluten containing counterparts. If you are gluten-free, then choosing naturally gluten-free products and carefully reading food labels can help you make the best nutritional choice.

Understanding plant-based protein

The notion that we don't get enough protein with a plant-based diet is a myth – here's what the science says

Words: Rob Hobson

Let's just start by saying, yes, you can get enough protein on a plant-based diet. No, you don't need to chuck back soy protein shakes every day or combine your beans and lentils with military precision. There's still a lot of confusion out there, but the science is clear: if you know what you're doing, plant-based diets can deliver all the protein your body needs.

Complete vs incomplete

The term 'complete protein' refers to foods that contain all nine essential amino acids in the right ratios your body needs. Animal-based proteins like meat, fish, eggs, and dairy tick this box, while most plant-based sources don't. It's a misconception that 'incomplete' proteins do not contain the essential amino acids of their animal counterparts, but simply that they are lower in one or more of them. This also doesn't mean that they're useless or inferior.

If you're eating a balanced, varied diet throughout the day, which could be oats in the morning, beans at lunch, and tofu at dinner, then you're already getting a good mix of amino acids from different plant proteins. This idea of combining proteins, known as complementary proteins, used to be something people thought they had to do at every meal, but we now know it's fine to spread it out across the day.

One of the big perks of plant proteins is that they often come bundled with fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidant plant compounds like polyphenols, which is another great reason for omnivores to mix things up and use more plant-based options.

How much protein can a plant-based diet provide?

The UK Reference Nutrient Intake (RNI) for protein is 0.75g per kilogram of body weight per day, so someone weighing 70kg would need around 52g daily. But it's important to remember that this is a *minimum* to prevent deficiency and not necessarily the optimal amount for everyone. If you're going through menopause, are physically active, or getting older, your needs are likely to be higher. In fact, research suggests that aiming for

6 GREAT SOURCES OF *plant-based protein*

Looking to boost your protein on a plant-based diet? These six foods deliver a solid protein hit – alongside fibre, minerals and antioxidants.

Lentils

(COOKED – 200G)

Cheap, filling, and very versatile in soups, curries and salads.

18g
PROTEIN

Tofu

(FIRM – 200G)

Complete protein source and great for stir-fries, scrambles or broths.

13g
PROTEIN

Chickpeas

(COOKED – 200G)

Use in curries, stews, falafel or roasted as a crunchy topping.

15g
PROTEIN

Quinoa

(COOKED – 180G)

Complete protein that doubles as a grain substitute with extra benefits.

Peanut butter

(SMOOTH – 2 TBSP/30G)

Great on toast, porridge, or in smoothies, but go easy on the portion size.

7.5g
PROTEIN

Edamame beans

(SHELLED – 150G)

These little green gems are protein powerhouses you can add to salads, bowls or enjoy on their own with sea salt.

17g
PROTEIN

1.2-2g per kilo of bodyweight can better support muscle maintenance, recovery, and overall health. If you're overweight, protein should be calculated based on your ideal or target weight rather than actual weight, to avoid overshooting what your body really needs.

Plant-based protein sources sometimes contain less protein per gram than animal-based options, which means you may need to eat slightly more overall to hit targets. Again, that's not difficult when you build meals around soy, nuts, seeds, legumes, grains and vegetables.

Do plant-based diets leave you deficient in protein?

One of the most persistent myths about plant-based diets is that they leave you protein deficient. But studies show that vegans and vegetarians in high-income countries like the UK typically meet (or exceed) their daily protein needs. Even athletes can thrive on a plant-based diet. A study published in the Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism (2016) showed that strength and muscle gains in plant-based athletes were equivalent to their omnivorous peers when protein intake was matched. The key is total daily intake and variety, not whether the protein came from a cow or a chickpea.

Do you need to use a protein powder?

If you're eating enough overall and getting a good variety of plant-based foods, you probably don't need a protein supplement. That said, there are times when it can be useful. If your protein needs are higher, say you're training regularly, recovering from illness or surgery, or following a more restrictive diet, then a plant-based protein powder can help top things up. Go for one that blends different plant proteins to provide a better mix of amino acids. And if you're using it post-workout, check that it delivers 2-3g of leucine, as this is the key amino acid that helps trigger muscle protein synthesis.

Supplements can also be convenient. I often recommend them for clients who train first thing in the morning and need a fast post-workout option, or those who are struggling with appetite (say, due to medication or age) and can't manage larger meals. This is often the case with those taking GLP-1 receptor agonists who can drink a small serving to help top up their daily protein intake.

If you are competing in sports then always choose a product tested for safety (Informed Sport certified) and try to find a product that has minimal additives or sweeteners.

Protein planning tips

– **Include a protein source at each meal** such as tofu, lentils, beans, tempeh or Quorn.

– **Don't forget about higher-protein whole grains** such as buckwheat, quinoa and amaranth.

– **Use fortified plant milks** and yoghurts and opt for soy as it contains similar protein levels to dairy (oat and nut milk are much lower in protein).

– **Think of vegetables as contributors too** as greens like broccoli and spinach all contain a few grams per serving. Peas are a better source at over 5g per 100g serving.

– **Snack smart:** roasted chickpeas, edamame, houmous, or a protein shake if needed.

Getting enough protein on a plant-based diet isn't as hard as people think. If you're eating a mix of whole foods across the day you should cover your bases. You don't need to obsess over combining foods or load up on shakes unless your needs are higher. It's about variety, balance and consistency. Plant-based diets aren't just about hitting a protein target as they bring fibre, antioxidants and a whole range of nutrients to the table as well, which is why they're a solid foundation for long-term health.

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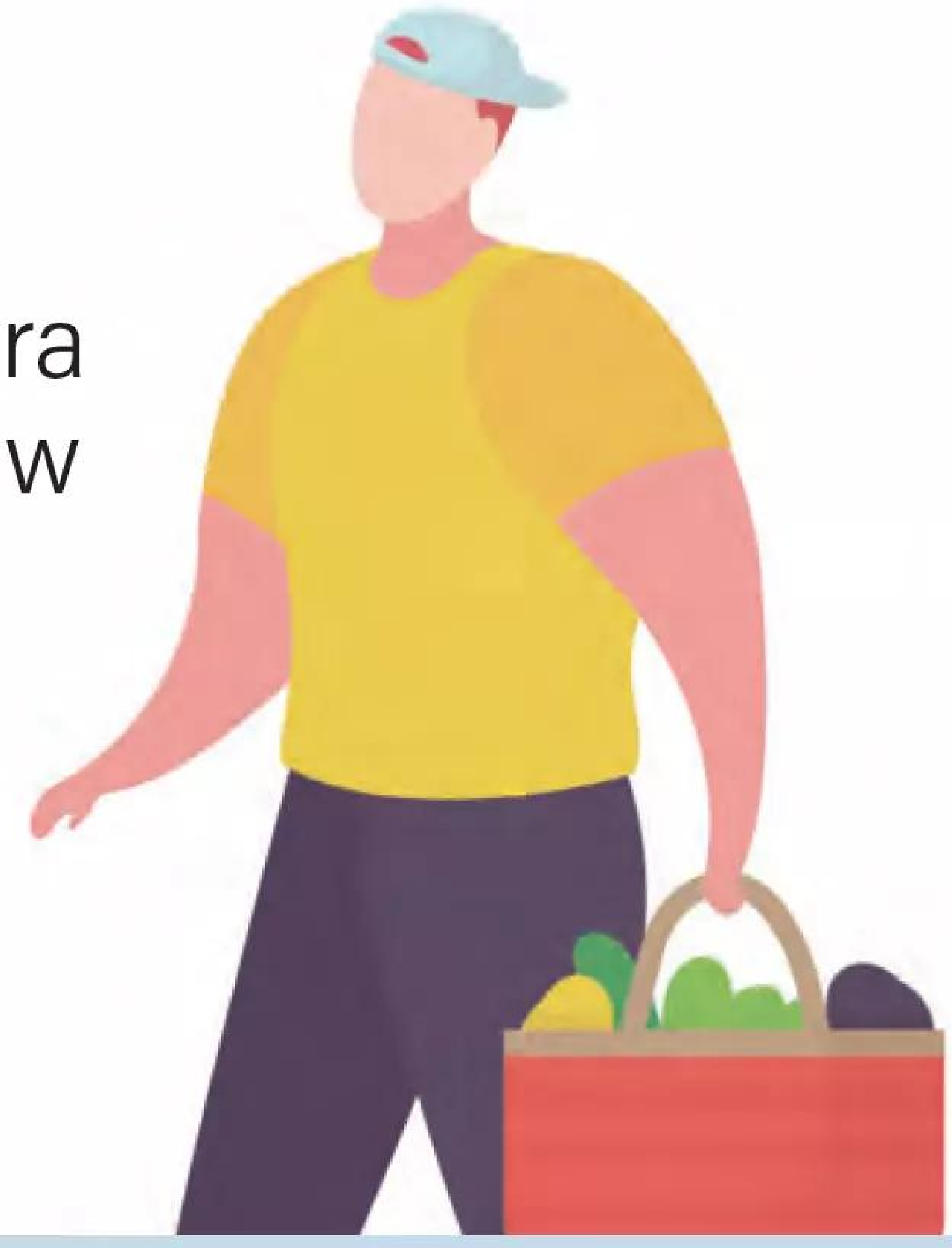
Let's go shopping

We've rounded up a few top products to look out for if you need a little extra help getting those last few grams of protein per day



vievé
PROTEIN WATER
20g Protein
peach & raspberry
500ml

JASON'S SOURDOUGH
PROTEIN IN EVERY SLICE 10g
SEEDED
PROTEIN

Jason's Sourdough Protein Seeded Loaf

£2.60 for 580g loaf, *jasonssourdough.co.uk*

When you're trying to increase your protein, you'll soon discover there are some easy wins to be had just by choosing the right products. This loaf is made from just eight ingredients, but each slice of bread is packed with 10g protein thanks to the use of wheat protein, pea protein and sunflower seeds. Head to Tesco to get your hands on a loaf.

Vieve Protein Water

£2.49 for 500ml, *drink-vieve.co.uk*

If you find drinking plain water boring, use it as an opportunity to up your protein intake too with Vieve Protein Water. Each drink contains 20g protein, 85 calories and no added sugar, so you can stay hydrated while topping up your protein. It's available in flavours such as Strawberry & Rhubarb, Wild Cherry, Peach & Raspberry or Pineapple & Coconut. Buy online.

HIGH PROTEIN
SEMI-SKIMMED
70g Protein per litre
DOUBLE PROTEIN*
80% MORE CALCIUM*
NOTHING ADDED
SuperNutrio

SuperNutrio High Protein Cow's Milk

£2.25 for 1 litre, *supernutrio.co.uk*

By passing two litres of everyday cow's milk through smart filters, this SuperNutrio milk concentrates the calcium and protein into one litre with up to double the nutrients. That means, a 250ml serving contains 17.5g of protein and 550mg calcium (whole milk version), without the additives. It's available to buy in either Whole or Semi-skimmed versions, and you can find it in Tesco, Sainsbury's and Ocado.

Squeaky Bean Tofu Slices

£2.50, squeakybean.co.uk

If you're plant-based, or just looking for a Meat-free Monday option, tofu is packed with protein. These tofu slices are handy for adding to a sandwich or stir-fry and contain 25g of protein per 100g. They also contain 5.6g of fibre per 100g as an added bonus. They're available in two flavours – Spinach & Basil and Red Pepper & Tomato – and you'll find them in Sainsbury's.

SQUEAKY BEAN
NEW
Plant Based
Tofu slices
RED PEPPER & TOMATO

Holie's Granola Protein Crunch

£3.50 for 350g, holiefoods.com

Holie's is on a mission to brighten up our breakfast times with a granola that's packed with protein, fibre and flavour, as well as being vegan and good for our gut! The Protein Crunch has no added sugar or sweeteners and 21 per cent protein (15g protein per 100g), and features a lovely blend of hazelnuts, almonds and seeds. Add it to your Ocado shop if you want to try it for yourself.

21% PROTEIN
0% ADDED SUGAR
HOLIE'S
positive change
GRANOLA
PROTEIN CRUNCH
HAZELNUTS, ALMONDS & SEEDS
GOOD FOR YOUR GUT

THE GYM KITCHEN
FOOD TO FUEL
HIGH PROTEIN
ORIGINAL CHICKEN SAUSAGES
17g
MACRO COUNTED

The Gym Kitchen High Protein Chicken Sausages

£3.25 for 6 sausages (340g), thegymkitchen.com

Swapping pork sausages for chicken is a top tip for boosting the protein content of a banger. The Gym Kitchen has two versions to choose from – Original, flavoured with roasted onion and black pepper, featuring 17g protein per two sausages (7g carbs, 4g fat), and Piri Piri, infused with red pepper and chilli, which has 18g protein per two sausages. Perfect for barbecue season! Pick a pack up from Tesco.

nush PROTEIN
HIGH PROTEIN ALMOND YOG
BLUEBERRY
NATURAL
STRAWBERRY
VANILLA FUDGE
19g
23g
17g
19g

Nush Protein Almond Yogs

£1.90 for 120g, £3.25 for 350g, nushfoods.co.uk

This dairy and soya-free yoghurt comes in five tasty flavours – Natural, Strawberry, Raspberry, Blueberry and Vanilla Fudge – and it's perfect for adding to your breakfast or teaming with some fruit for a healthy dessert. It combines almond drink with sustainably grown fava beans, and the flavoured pots contain at least 16g plant-based protein per 350g pot, while the Natural version contains 23g. Pick them up from Ocado, Waitrose, M&S, Wholefoods or independent health shops.

Yeo Valley
ORGANIC
0% FAT
GREEK RECIPE
STRAINED NATURAL YOGURT
10g PROTEIN PER 100G
THICK & CREAMY
NATURALLY LOW SUGAR

Yeo Valley Organic 0% Fat Natural Yoghurt

£3.25 for 450g, yeovalley.co.uk

With no added ingredients or sugar, this simple yoghurt just contains milk. It's made to be extra creamy and extra thick. With 10g protein per 100g serving, Greek yoghurt is an essential item for your fridge as it is incredibly versatile. Get it from Asda, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, Morrisons and Co-op.

PASTEURISED
two chicks
effortless eggs
Free Range Egg White
15 liquid egg whites
High protein
Fat free

Two Chicks Liquid Egg White

£3.50 for 500g, twochicks.co.uk

You'll know by now that eggs are a brilliant way to get protein. Another tip if you're trying to watch the calories and cholesterol is to combine whole eggs and egg whites. The easiest way to do this is to buy a carton of liquid egg whites to save any wastage. This version contains 10.9g protein per 100g and has the equivalent of 15 eggs per carton. Buy from Tesco, Sainsbury's, Morrisons and Asda.

M&S Apple Crumble Overnight Oats

£2.50 for 200g, M&S

Swapping your cereal for a high protein breakfast choice is one of the easiest ways to start your day in the right way. But when you're in a hurry you don't always want to be cooking up eggs or the like. These pots of overnight oats are perfect for breakfast on the go, and the combination of creamy yoghurt, apple compote and chia seeds (plus the addition of the tasty oat crumble topping) means it's not only high in protein, but a great source of fibre too. Each pot contains 18g protein.

eat well
18g Protein
APPLE CRUMBLE OVERNIGHT OATS

Aldi Chicken Sizzle Steaks

£2.99, Aldi

Most of the time when we fail to hit our meal protein targets it's on days when we're trying to make lunch or dinner from leftovers in the kitchen. These chicken sizzle steaks from Aldi are frozen, so they're a handy addition to the freezer for times just like these! They contain 18g of protein per serving and cook from frozen in just 6 minutes, so are perfect if you're in a hurry.

Roosters
I'm New
CHICKEN SIZZLE STEAKS
PROTEIN
GARLIC & HERB
18 PROTEIN PER SERVING

Supermarket **own-brand** stars

Tesco High Protein Red Lentil Fusilli

£1.80 for 250g, Tesco

As we mentioned on day 11, an easy way to boost protein is to swap wheat pasta for lentil pasta. Made using red lentil flour, this version is gluten-free and contains 21g protein per 75g (uncooked weight) portion. It's a great source of fibre too, so you'll get two big benefits in one, just by switching to this healthier pasta. Just remember to check the cooking time as lentil pasta cooks quicker than wheat, so you'll only need to cook it for 6-8 minutes to prevent it getting too soggy.

TESCO
HIGH PROTEIN
20g
Red Lentil Fusilli

M&S Cheddar Cheese Clouds

£1.25 for 20g, M&S

If you're looking for a snack that's got more protein than a packet of crisps, but still satisfies the need for something crunchy to go with your sandwich at lunch, this could be a good option for you. The only ingredient in these cheesy clouds is indeed Cheddar cheese! For this reason, they contain 8g protein and 118 calories per bag. The texture may not be for everyone, but we're fans.

M&S -FOOD-
High protein choices
8g Protein
CHEDDAR CHEESE CLOUDS
100% baked Cheddar cheese
HIGH IN PROTEIN
118KCAL PER bag

Sainsbury's Cherry & Vanilla Protein Fat-Free Yoghurt

£1 for 165g, Sainsbury's

Yoghurts are a great high protein snack or dessert, and there are many brilliant own-brand supermarket versions to try, like this one from Sainsbury's. There are a few different flavours in the range, including Strawberry and Mango & Passion Fruit, and the fat-free, strained yoghurts are blended with fruit conserve to give a nice fruity flavour. Each serving contains 15g protein.

Cherry & Vanilla
Protein
fat free yogurt
naturally sweetened
15g
by Sainsbury's

TESCO
HIGH PROTEIN
10g
4 Blueberry Pancakes

Tesco High Protein Blueberry Pancakes

£1.75, Tesco

Supermarket products are embracing high protein and you can get great treats with added protein. Take these pancakes... each buttermilk one contains 10g protein, and you can add more by teaming them with a spoonful of Greek yoghurt, seeds and a sprinkling of berries for a satisfying breakfast.

The Protein Ball Co. protein balls

£18.99 for 10 bags, 45g each (6 balls), theproteinballco.com
Protein balls are a handy snack option. The Protein Ball Co. has a selection that are all natural, have no added sugar, are gluten-free and packed with vitamins B12, C and D3. The balls are made using whey or egg white protein, or the plant-based balls are made from pea, brown rice or pumpkin. Flavours include Choc Chip Muffin, Peanut Butter, and Lemon & Pistachio. Order online.

Warrior Creatine Protein Bar

£19.99 for 12 bars, teamwarrior.com
If you're a keen gym-goer and are trying to build muscle rather than just maintain, you might have heard about the benefits of creatine. It helps to increase strength, enhance muscle growth and aid recovery, while also supporting brain health. These protein bars blend 3g of creatine with 20g of protein for a supercharged snack. They're available in three flavours – Chocolate Orange, Chocolate Peanut and Salted Caramel Brownie – and are both low-sugar and low-fat. Order online.

Protein bars and powders

Grenade Protein Bars

£2.85 for 60g bar, grenade.com
Grenade has taken supermarkets by storm with its range of protein bars – you may have seen the Oreo Protein Bar, which is made with chunks of Oreo. Each 60g bar contains more than 20g protein, 2g sugar and under 250 calories. There are 14 different flavours, including Oreo, Peanut Nutter, Lemon Cheesecake, Fudged Up and Jaffa Quake. In selected supermarkets they can be included in a lunchtime meal deal.

Activate Protein Powder

£26.99 for 450g (15 servings), bio-synergy.uk
Activate is a protein shake that's been designed especially for active women. Each 30g serving contains 25g of whey and micellar casein protein to help you kick-start recovery right after a workout. It also has added green tea extract to help put a bounce in your step and boost your metabolism, as well as vitamins D, B5, B6, calcium, zinc and folic acid. It's available in either Chocolate or Strawberry flavours. Buy online.

Protein Works 100% Protein Powder

£16.99 for 625g (25 shakes), theproteinworks.com
This shake is a great protein top-up if a meal has come up short. Mix a scoop of powder with 300ml water for a shake that has 18g protein and 93 calories. It comes in a range of flavours – Banana Smoothie, Chocolate Bueno, Chocolate Silk, Millionaire's Shortbread and Salted Caramel – and 100 per cent of the active ingredients are from protein sources. Buy online.

OTE Chocolate Soya Recovery Drink Powder

£47.50 for 20 servings, otesports.co.uk
This soya drink is aimed at the sporty, designed to help repair and rebuild muscle after exercise. It's a vegan formula and can be made by adding water, so is perfect for vegans, vegetarians and those with lactose intolerance. Each drink contains 25g protein, and it also has added electrolytes to aid rehydration, plus vitamins to boost the immune system. Buy online.

Using protein to support your fitness

Words: Charlie Watson

The more exercise we do, the more protein we need – here's how it works, and how to stay topped up

As athletes, protein is often hailed as the most important macronutrient. We are constantly pitched high protein products that we are told that we need to help achieve our fitness goals. Whether that's to help build muscle or aid recovery, protein speeds up muscle repair and glycogen replacement.

Protein should be prioritised after a workout while carbohydrates are the preferred source of fuel for the body prior to exercise.

But how much do we really need? Are we getting enough in our diets, or do we really need all these protein powders, bars and drinks to help us hit our protein targets?

How can protein support fitness goals?

Those with athletic goals – recreational, elite or anywhere on the scale – require higher protein intake than the British Nutrition Foundation recommendation of 0.75g/kg bodyweight per day. Whether the goal is to run a marathon, complete a Hyrox or build strength, requirements can be more than double that of an average person. Our protein needs are based on age, build, intensity, duration and type of exercise.

Protein plays a key role in building muscle. Intense workouts like powerlifting and sprinting cause microtrauma to muscle tissues, triggering the body to repair and rebuild the fibres, which in turn leads to muscle growth. This process is called muscle protein synthesis, where amino acids found in protein fix these tears, which alongside exercise, can increase muscle size.

How much extra protein do you need?

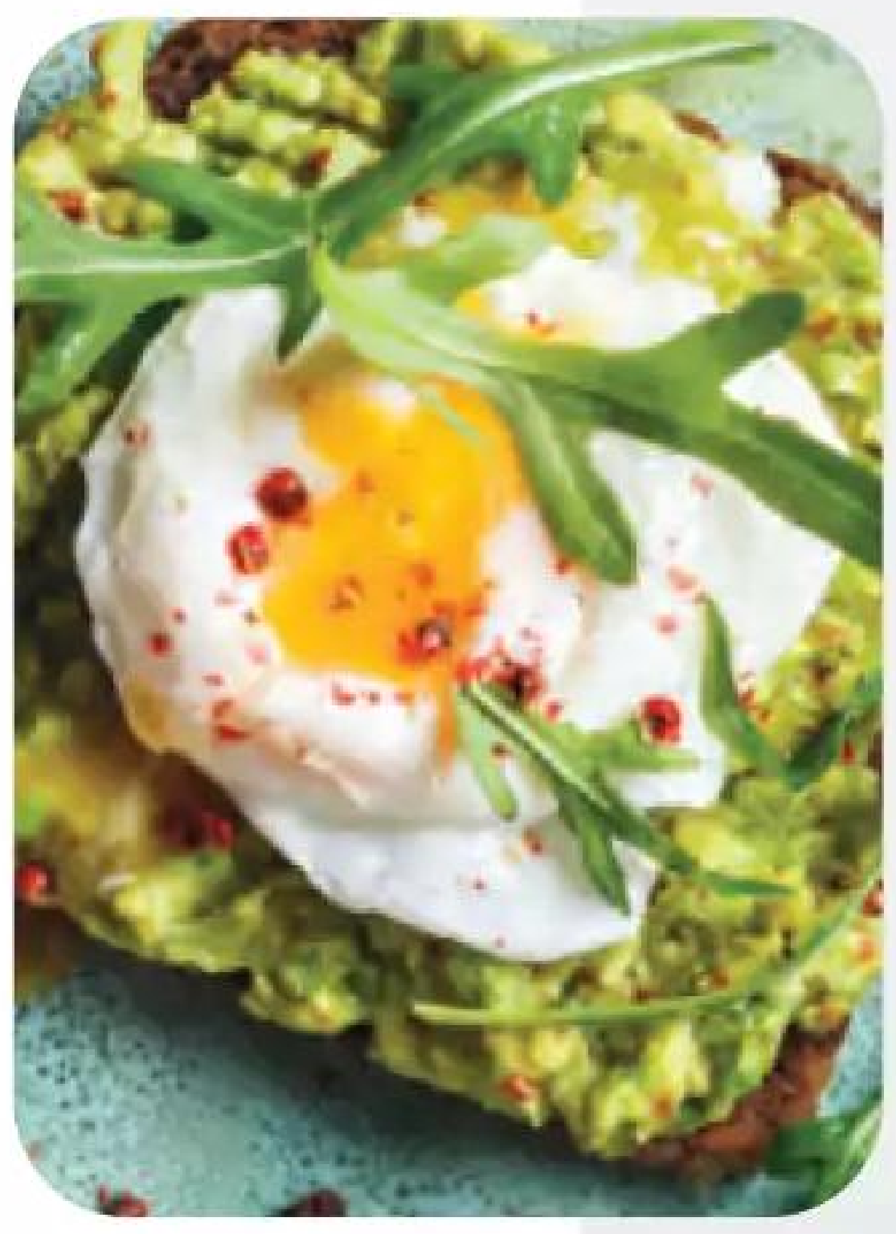
For those wanting to build muscle or support intense training, needs are likely to be greater depending on frequency and intensity of activity and their goals.

Strength training	**1.4-2g a day** per kg of bodyweight
Bodybuilding	**2g a day** per kg of bodyweight
Endurance training	**1.2-2g a day** per kg of bodyweight
HIIT/Functional fitness	**1.2-1.7g a day** per kg of bodyweight

HIGH-PROTEIN MEALS *for training*

What does a day's food look like if you're doing a lot of training?

BREAKFAST IDEAS



○ **Greek yoghurt with fruit and granola** 20g+ protein

○ **3 egg omelette with cheese** 20g+ protein

○ **Avocado on toast with poached eggs** 20g protein

○ **Protein pancakes with berries and Greek yoghurt** 30-40g protein

○ **Smoothie with protein powder, nut butter and milk (or non-dairy equivalent)** 20-40g protein

LUNCH IDEAS

○ **Grain bowl with brown rice or quinoa, lean protein, such as chicken, salmon or tofu and veggies** 30-40g protein

○ **Tuna or chicken sandwich with side salad** 20-25g protein

○ **Tuna or salmon niçoise salad with boiled egg** 30g protein

○ **3 bean salad** 20g protein

○ **Steak, chicken or tofu burrito bowl** 30-40g protein

DINNER IDEAS

○ **Wholegrain pasta with Bolognese or meatballs** 25g protein

○ **Chicken, prawn or tofu stir-fry with fried egg** 30-40g protein

○ **Mince or bean chilli with wholegrain rice** 30-40g protein

○ **Fish or chicken/turkey traybake with veggies and potatoes** 30-40g protein

○ **Beef or chicken stew or curry with wholegrain rice** 30-40g protein

Adding in extra protein-rich snacks such as Greek yoghurt, nuts, jerky, boiled eggs or edamame beans between meals or after a workout can help you meet your daily target. You could also consider keeping protein bars or drinks in your gym bag, car or office to ensure you aren't going through long periods without a protein hit.

Simple swaps to your dishes also bump up your protein intake. Swapping white rice or pasta for wholegrain options, or choosing lentil pasta, increases not only protein but fibre intake. Add a dollop of Greek yoghurt to dishes such as curries, chilli, burritos or pancakes. Additionally, stirring in beans, lentils or peas to your dishes adds an extra portion of veggies, and a little protein boost too.

Protein supports the anabolic response necessary for muscle hypertrophy, whereby muscle proteins are made faster than they are broken down, resulting in muscle growth. A high protein diet can help offset the catabolic effects of strength training, where muscle and fat breaks down to provide energy for the body.

Protein provides the building blocks for muscle growth and repair. Our bodies use 20 different amino acids to build protein, 11 of these are synthesised within the human body while the other nine must be consumed via our diet. The nine essential amino acids are known as BCAAs (branch-chain amino acids). Leucine, a BCAA, is a key activator in the body that directly stimulates

A high protein diet can help offset the catabolic effects of strength training

muscle protein synthesis, which is why you might want to look out for protein powders or supplements that contain leucine if you are buying sports nutrition products.

Muscle protein synthesis requires a constant supply of BCAAs. Which is why eating multiple 20-40g protein portions throughout the day supports better recovery than one large portion of protein. This can be broken down into multiple meals, snacks and drinks to help meet your daily protein target. What we also know is that the amount we consume in a single portion is important. Too little and we don't stimulate muscle protein synthesis, too much and our body simply can't utilise it.

Does age matter?

Athletes, or those with fitness goals over the age of 40, need to be more mindful of protein intake. Stats show that we lose 3-8 per cent of our muscle mass every decade after 30 years old (although these are for the sedentary population) and when we look at active individuals, the percentage of muscle mass loss is significantly less. However, over the age of 40, while our response to training remains, the body's response to protein reduces, decreasing the capacity for training adaptations. In order to stimulate muscle protein synthesis, protein requirements increase. For younger athletes, 20-30g is enough whereas older adults need closer to 40g in a meal or snack to support lean muscle mass.

Strength training and undertaking power-based exercises are understood to have the highest protein requirements. Protein requirements are thought to be higher during the initial stages of strength/power training, or during sharp increases in volume, and can actually decrease as a result of training as protein metabolism becomes more efficient.

We talk a lot about the impact of protein on muscle growth, but we also need it for tissue repair, for our bones and cartilage, as well as muscles. Endurance athletes (runners in particular) benefit from adequate protein intake to support recovery and build muscle to boost performance.

However, protein on its own is not effective for muscle recovery. We want to be consuming protein with carbohydrates to promote glycogen resynthesis and stimulating muscle protein synthesis. Ideally this would be in a 3:1 or 4:1 ratio (research isn't conclusive on the perfect ratio), but what is clear is that protein intake should not be at the expense of carbohydrate consumption.

What is the anabolic window and does it matter?

The timing of consuming a protein-rich meal following a workout can help to aid your recovery and promote muscle growth

The anabolic window, also known as the protein window, typically refers to the 30-60 minute period of time after exercise. This was thought to be the key timeframe to consume protein and carbs post workout to maximise muscle growth and repair. Intense training causes a depletion of stored fuel (glycogen and amino acids) as well as causing muscle fibre damage – previously it was believed that consuming a combination of protein and carbohydrates during this timeframe would initiate muscle recovery and restoration of energy reserves.

The idea of an anabolic window suggests that there is a limited time frame for this to occur to optimise training adaptations. While many studies support the idea of consuming post-workout protein, evidence now supports that our muscles are receptive to protein for 4-6 hours, and can remain sensitised to exercise even up to 24 hours later. So prioritising a protein-rich meal or snack within the next couple of hours following a workout will help your muscles grow and adapt to physiological changes of exercises.

Ideally, you want to try to consume 20-40g of protein and 30-90g of carbohydrates – although the exact amount varies from person to person, workout goals and daily nutrition. The exception to this is after a fasted workout, where post-training muscle breakdown is significantly increased. When we train fasted, our body burns through glycogen stores more quickly and there are fewer amino acids circulating within the body to encourage muscle protein synthesis. If it has been 4-6 hours since your last meal, post-exercise nutrition is even more important to help promote muscular adaptations and recovery.

The key takeaway is that the closer the timing of your meal to your workout, the less need for immediate post-workout protein.

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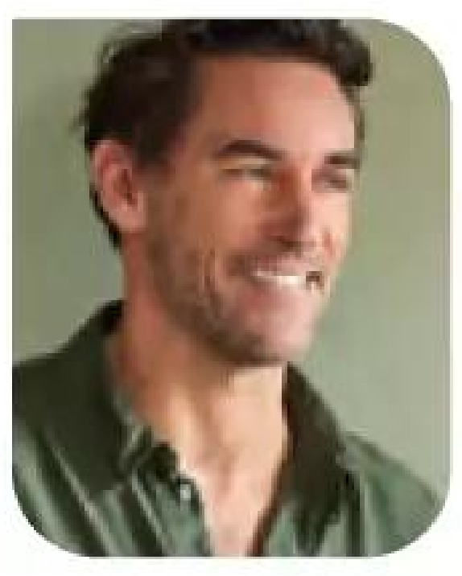
Introducing our experts

To make sure we're bringing you the most reliable, up-to-date information we've gathered a team of experts to write this issue for you...

VJ HAMILTON

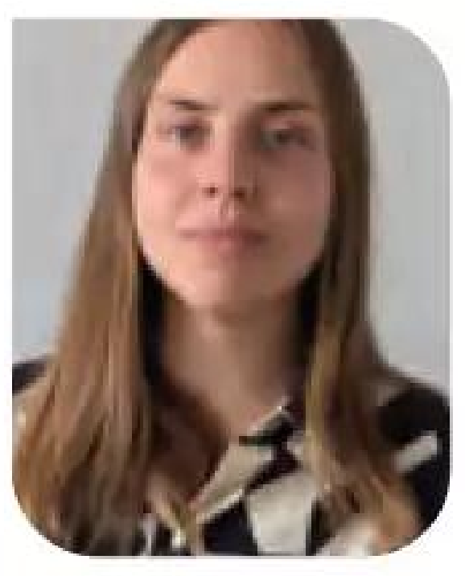
VJ, founder of The Autoimmunity Nutritionist, is a leading expert in autoimmune disease, specialising in skin disorders, chronic fatigue, joint health and gut health. A Registered Nutritionist with a BSc in Biochemistry & Immunology, she empowers clients through her 1-2-1 functional medicine consultations, and hosts The Autoimmune RESET® podcast. theautoimmunitynutritionist.com

ROB HOBSON



Rob is an award-winning Registered Nutritionist, best-selling author, and TV expert with more than 20 years of experience. He works with private clients, top brands, and is resident nutritionist on *This Morning*. His latest book, *Unprocess Your Family Life*, is out now.

ZOE MILLER



Zoe is a health and medical writer and Doctor. Zoe studied biological sciences at Aston University, then went on to study medicine at Warwick University. After graduation, she worked as a Doctor within the West Midlands in urology, respiratory medicine, infectious disease, and psychiatry, before transitioning into a full-time medical communications role. Zoe is currently working as a freelance medical writer.

CHARLIE WATSON

Charlie is a Dietitian and author of book *Cook Eat Run,* which shares a no-nonsense approach to eating for runners and athletes of all levels. She is also the host of the running nutrition podcast of the same name. Charlie previously worked as Deputy Cookery Editor at *Good Housekeeping* magazine and now works as an NHS Neuro Dietitian. She documents her life balancing running, travelling and chasing a toddler at *therunnerbeans.com*

LOUISE PYNE

Louise is a CNHC Registered Nutritionist. With a special interest in women's wellbeing, Louise works with clients to get to the root of health issues to help restore optimum wellness. She is also a freelance health journalist and writes for a range of national publications on the subjects of health and wellbeing.

RENEE MCGREGOR CLINIC

The Renee McGregor Clinic is a leading sports nutrition and recovery service specialising in RED-S, hormonal health and athlete performance. It provides expert, science-backed support to help individuals build strength, resilience, and a healthy relationship with food and movement. The clinic's holistic approach guides clients through the physical and emotional aspects of recovery as an ongoing journey.

30 DAYS TO Increase Your Protein

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Anthem's purpose is to help people lead happier, healthier lives. As part of this, since 2019 Anthem has donated over £78,000 to charities connected with mental health, food banks, community projects and international aid.

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Why do we need more protein as we get older?

Words: Fiona Horsfield

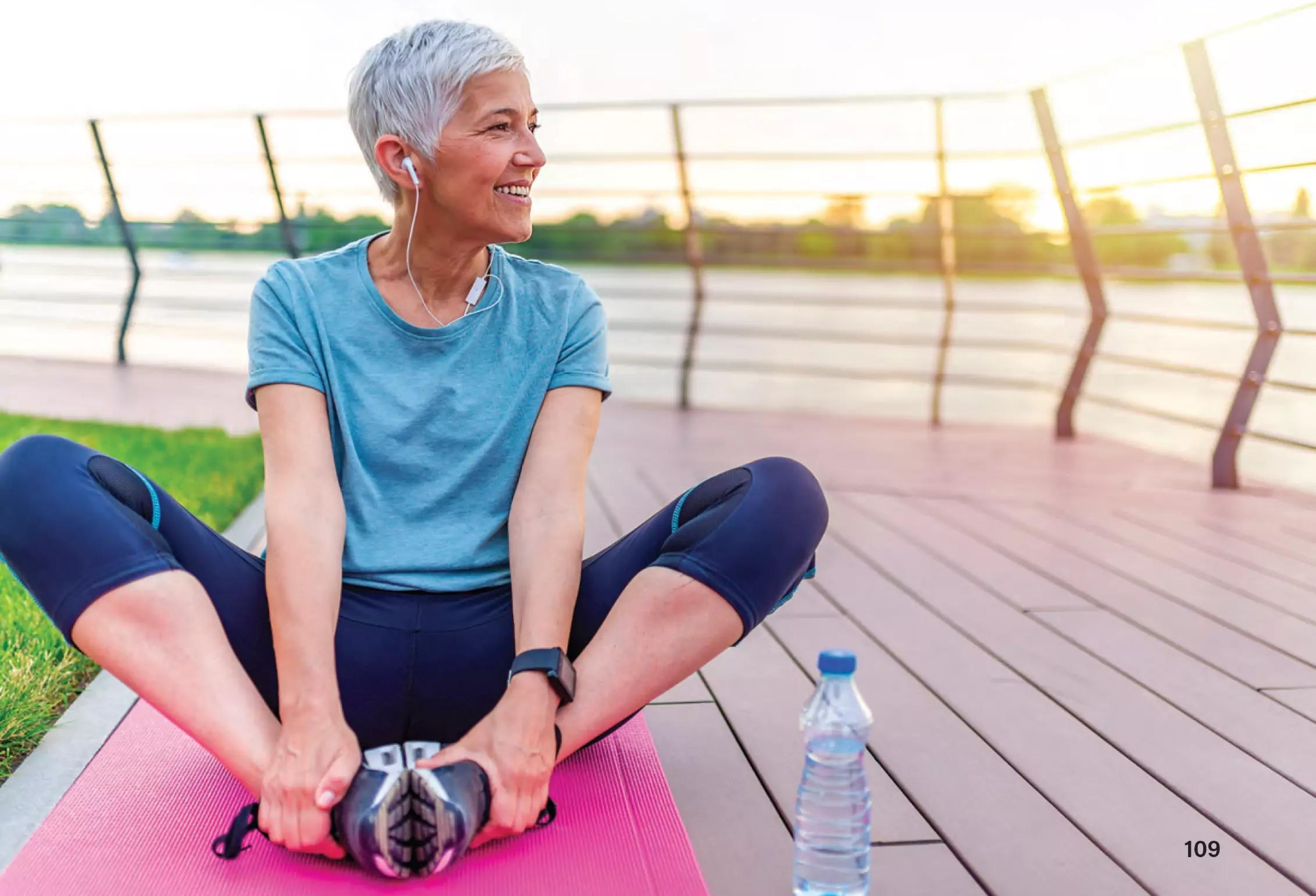
After 30, muscle mass decreases 3-8 per cent every decade and this speeds up when we reach 60. Here's why protein becomes even more essential as we age...

As we get older, one of the changes that we see happening to our bodies is a reduction in the amount of muscle we have. We reach our peak muscle mass by around the age of 30 and then this begins to decline. By 60, we are losing about one per cent muscle mass per year.

Sarcopenia is the term applied to age-related muscle mass loss and function, and this can affect both men and women.

We all need adequate protein – and muscle – to allow us to perform everyday tasks. Simple movements, such as getting up from the toilet, out of bed or being able to pick something up from the floor, all require muscle mass and strength. As we get older and lose muscle mass, these movements can become more difficult as a result.

We have all heard the old adage "use it or lose it!" and this is very true when it comes to our muscles.



> "As you reach over 40 years old it is more likely that you will need 1.2-1.5g/kg of protein each day."

Muscles respond positively to being used. When we exercise, the muscles are primed to repair and strengthen with protein from our diet.

The more we use our muscles, the more protection we are providing our body for our older years, and we are taking pro-active steps to remaining mobile and independent.

Exercise can involve strength-training or classes at the gym, but equally being active, such as gardening, and even carrying shopping bags, will all help to keep muscles firing and developing.

With a reduction in muscle mass and function, we become frailer and at a greater risk of falling and being less mobile. This can contribute to a loss of independent living, low mood and depression, and also social isolation. There is also an increased risk of developing chronic disease.

Increasing risk factors

Protein is not all about strength – having a body with adequate muscle stores improves our metabolism. This is important for us to help manage our weight and reduce the risk of obesity. Protein helps our body regulate sugar levels, and subsequently manage conditions such as type 2 diabetes.

The main reason we lose muscle as we age is that nutrition and exercise stop having the same positive effect on developing muscles. This is called anabolic resistance. Exercising and eating protein-rich foods, which allow us to build muscle when we are younger, doesn't have quite the same impact as we get older. Muscle does not develop as effectively, and the rate at which it breaks down is faster.

Another contributing factor is that our hormone levels decline with age. From around the age of 40, women's oestrogen levels significantly reduce. Oestrogen has a vital role in contributing to muscle growth and development, and the rate of muscle loss increases. A reduction of testosterone in men also contributes to muscle loss, but this is a steadier decline over time.

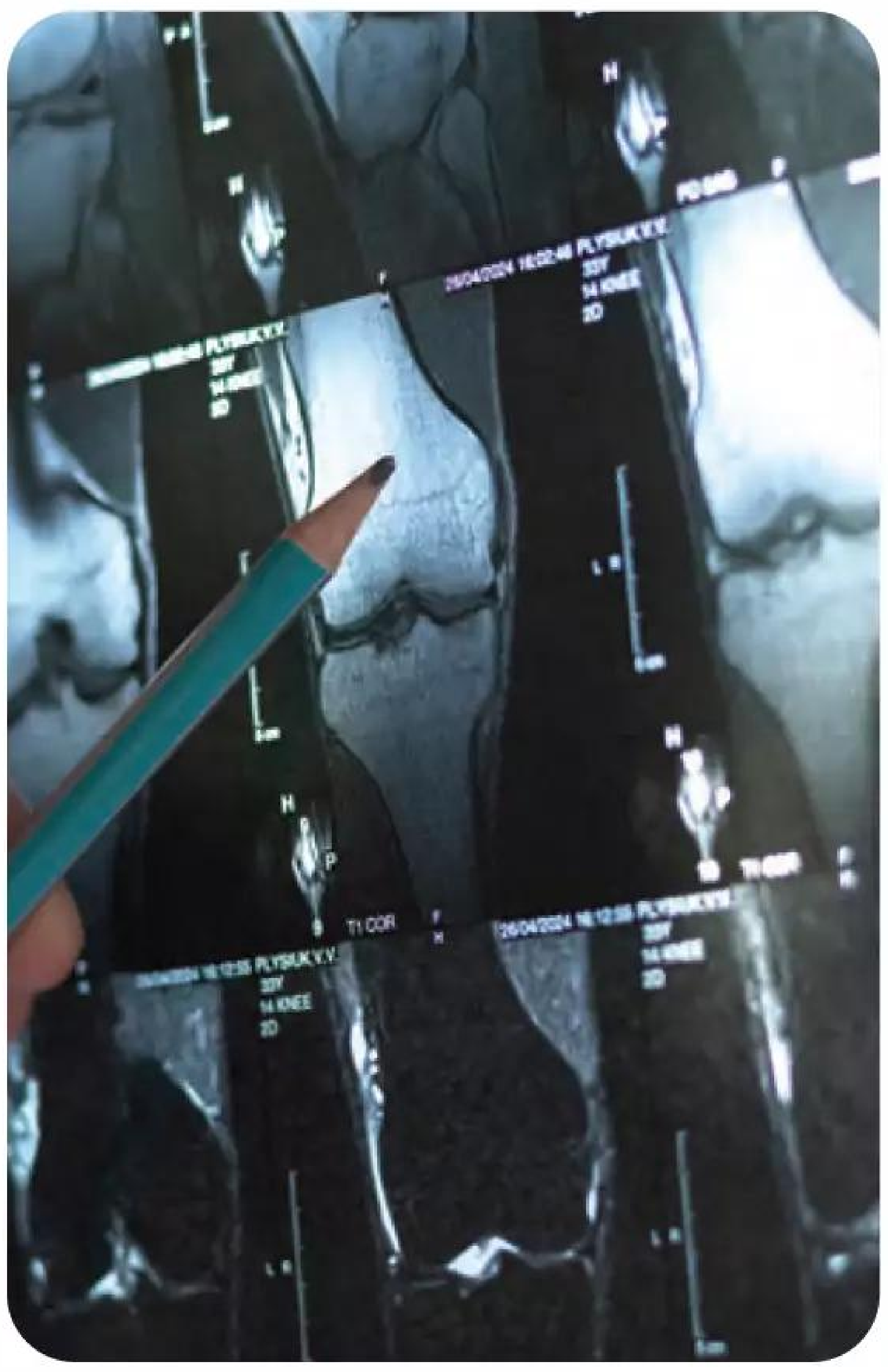
As we get older, we are generally less active and involved in fewer sports, which contributes to age-related muscle loss. As the amount of muscle mass reduces, so too does the quality of muscle. The lean muscle stores are replaced by fat stores, and contribute to obesity as we age.

There is a gradual change in the protein and amino acid metabolism,

6 benefits of protein as we age

Supports our bone health

Protein helps to improve our bone density and prevents osteoporosis and bone fractures.

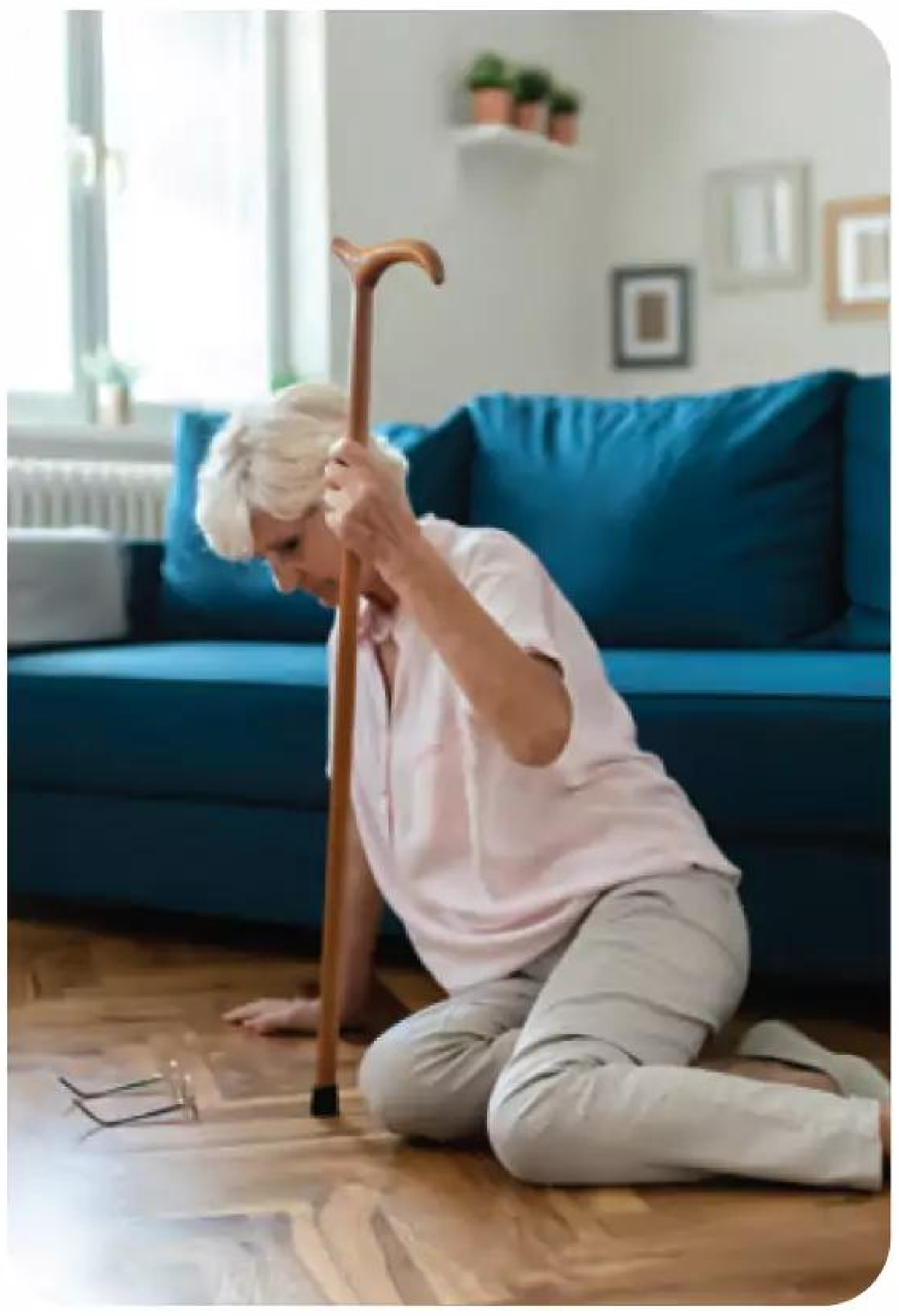


Maintains our muscles and strength

Protein is essential for building and maintaining muscle mass. In turn, this helps to keep us mobile, independent and able to enjoy being active for as long as we possibly can.

Reduces our risk of falling

Falls are often the result of reduced muscle strength. Protein reduces our risk of falls by strengthening our key muscle groups.



which don't regulate as effectively as when we are younger. This creates an imbalance in how much protein is being built up, and how much is being broken down. This impacts the skeletal muscle and also has an affect across the body in the heart, skin and brain. Our physical health can be affected adversely as a result.

How much protein should you be consuming?

So how much protein do we actually need as we get older? As we've mentioned previously, the current RDI (Recommended Daily Intake) is a minimum of 0.75g of protein for each kilogram of body weight, for each day, so for example a 60kg adult would require 45g of protein each day.

Recent evidence has shown that the actual amount that each individual needs to maintain adequate muscle mass and a healthy system is likely to be much higher than this. This figure also depends on how active you are. As you reach over 40 years old it is more likely that you will need 1.2-1.5g/kg of protein each day. This would mean that a 60kg adult would require 72-90g protein each day, from a broad range of sources.

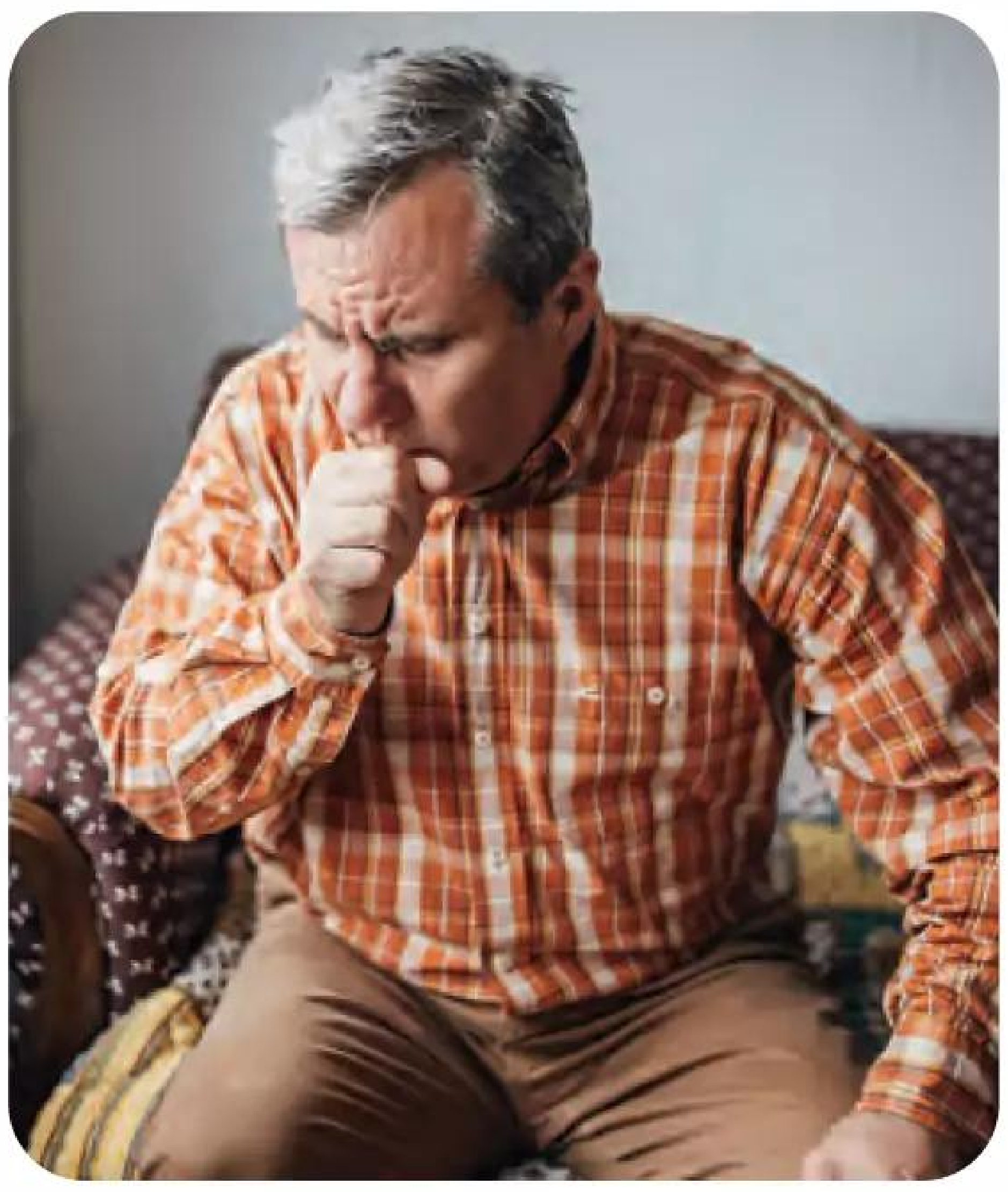
It is also important to have a healthy balanced diet, and ensure that we eat enough of the other essential food groups. Carbohydrates are our number one fuel source, and we want to make sure that there is enough energy provided so our body does not start using protein as a fuel source, which would affect the muscles. We also rely on carbohydrates to help maintain a positive hormonal balance. Other nutrients such as vitamin D, antioxidants, magnesium, omega-3 fatty acids and probiotics have also been shown to help in promoting muscle development.

Boosts our metabolism

Protein boosts metabolism by increasing muscle mass, requiring more energy for digestion, and enhancing thermogenesis, leading to greater calorie burn. This helps to prevent weight gain and developing obesity.

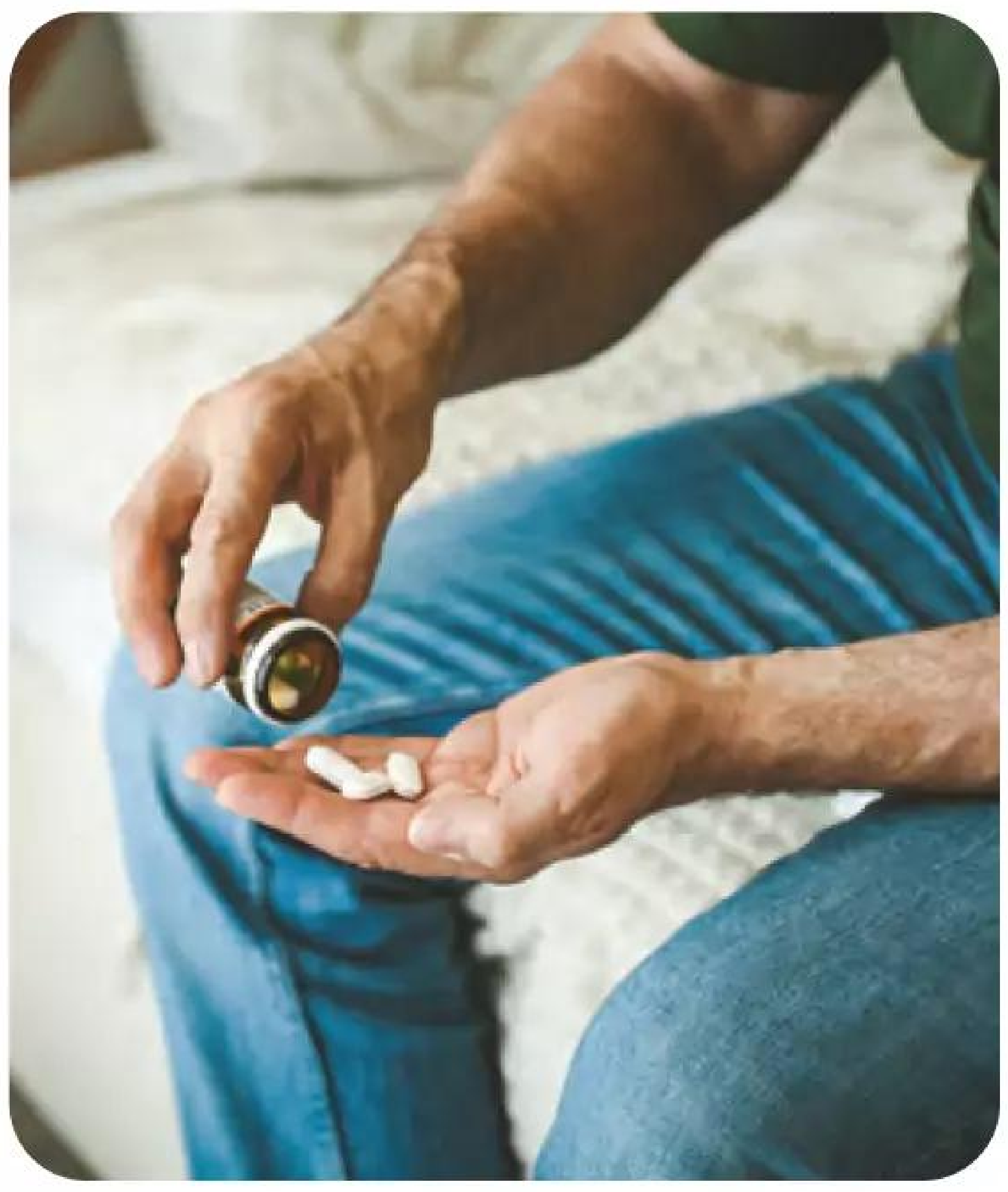
Improves our immune system

Protein builds antibodies, enzymes and immune cells, supporting immune responses, tissue repair and defence against infections and harmful pathogens. A strong immune system helps us to fight off infections and recover quicker.



Reduces risk of chronic diseases

Because protein supports muscle maintenance, regulates metabolism, aids repair and promotes satiety, all these things combine to reduce risk of chronic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, and help maintain a healthy heart.



Power up protein to BOOST YOUR GUT

Words: Louise Pyne

Discover the role of this crucial macronutrient in helping to support your optimum digestive health

Protein is best known for its important role in muscle tissue growth and repair. It's the go-to nutrient that we reach for when we're striving to enhance workout gains and speed up recovery post-exercise, but you might be surprised to discover that this essential macronutrient also impacts gut health.

The all-important microbiome, a finely tuned balance of trillions of different bacteria that live in the digestive system, has an intrinsic relationship with protein. "The gut microbiome may help with protein digestion in a range of ways. It can ferment it, break it down and facilitate the absorption of proteins and amino acids. Most protein digestion takes place in the stomach and the small intestine", explains Public Health Nutritionist Dr Emma Derbyshire, advisor to PrecisionBiotics, (*precisionbiotics.co.uk*).

Meet your daily protein needs

Official UK health guidelines state that adults require 0.75g of protein per kg bodyweight, but the general consensus is that most of us require more than this quota, depending on age and activity levels. Increasing protein intake to somewhere between 1.2 and 2g of protein per kg bodyweight is thought to be a more adequate daily protein goal.

Increasing protein can sometimes lead to digestive discomfort, especially if your body is not used to processing higher amounts. Constipation, bloating and excess gas are common complaints and the best way around these issues is to make sure you stay well hydrated. Drinking about 2 litres of water every day can help to alleviate constipation and give your kidneys a helping hand at processing protein. Increasing fibre-rich foods, such as non-starchy vegetables (for example broccoli, spinach, kale), in small but frequent meals can also give digestion a helping hand. Another good step is to take a probiotic supplement, many of which can contain around one billion bacteria, which can also help to provide daily maintenance support for gut health.

The link between protein and fibre

Protein and fibre are indirectly connected, because dietary protein can help to support the microbiome, which plays a crucial role in fermenting fibre. This fermentation process provides beneficial compounds, such as short-chain fatty acids (SCFA's), including acetate, butyrate and propionate that help to maintain the integrity of the gut lining, reduce inflammation and help to support overall digestive health.

Load up on protein foods

Adopting a varied diet helps to nourish gut health, and while fibre is often the first nutrient that springs to mind to help heal the gut, protein can also help to nurture the digestive system. Making sure that you choose unprocessed forms of protein that are easy to digest is the best way forward. "Look for protein sources that are nutrient-dense, easily digestible and beneficial to the gut microbiome. You will find that high-quality protein foods often also include fibres, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals that promote digestive health", explains Dr Derbyshire.

Here's a rundown of some of the best protein sources...

EGGS

Not only are eggs cheap, versatile and super-tasty, they offer an easy way to get a protein fix. Whether you enjoy them sunny side up, soldier-style or poached, two eggs will provide a very decent 12-14g of protein.

OILY FISH

Oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines and herring (best remembered by the acronym SMASH) are not only rich in healthy fats, but they also offer a hefty helping of protein. Fill your plate with a palm-size amount to get the protein that you need.

LEGUMES

Lentils and beans offer a two-for-one nutrient fix as they are rich in protein and fibre. If legumes usually leave you feeling bloated, opt for smaller amounts of tinned rather than dried varieties as these are generally easier to digest.

GREEK YOGHURT

Plain Greek yoghurt is a fab diet addition as it can help to amplify everything from breakfast granolas to curries and dips. Greek yoghurt actually contains more protein than regular yoghurt thanks to its thick consistency that offers a concentrated source of protein and is great for gut health.

TOFU

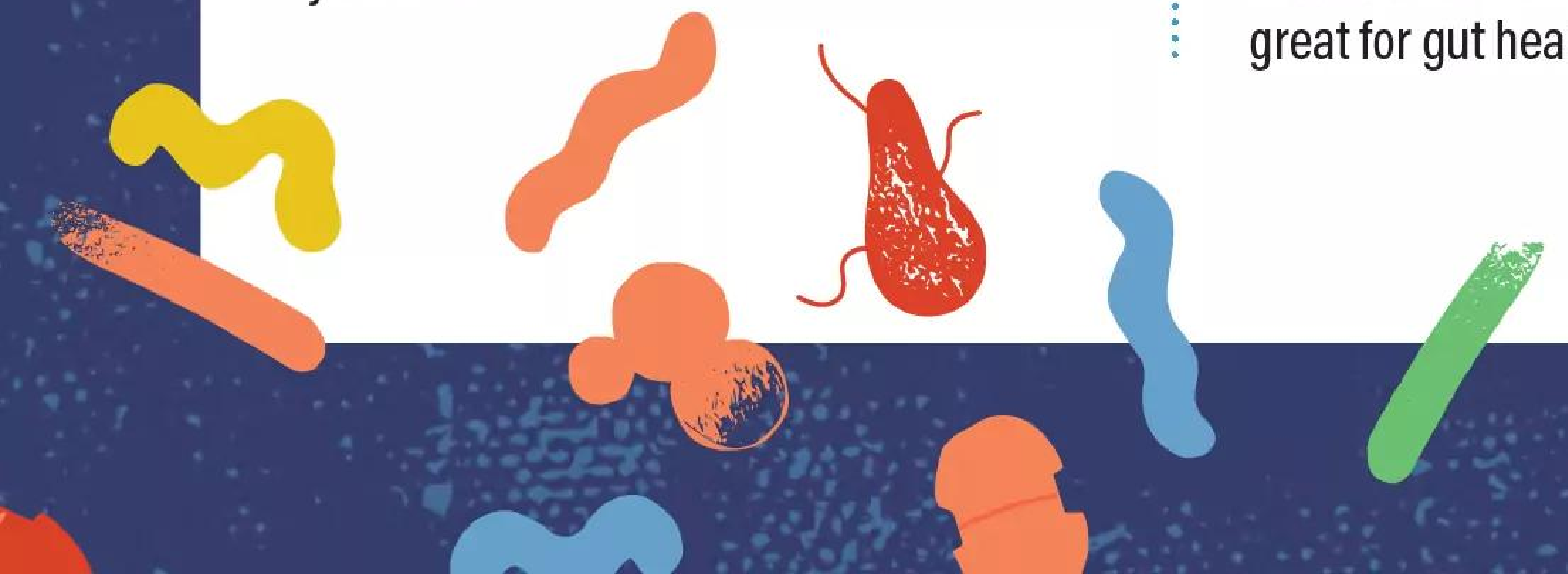
Tofu is a great protein option for plant-based eaters. It's also rich in a range of minerals, such as iron, calcium and magnesium, and is a good source of fibre.

QUINOA

Quinoa works well as an accompaniment to salads, casseroles and curries, and this staple kitchen ingredient is a powerhouse of protein and fibre.

MEAT

All meat is high in protein. Fill a quarter of your plate with meat for adequate protein. One chicken breast contains about 25-30g of protein, while lamb and beef generally also contain similar amounts.



What's next?

NEXT ISSUE

In our next issue we are looking at how you can improve your everyday strength and maintain muscle. *30 Days To... Getting Stronger* goes on sale in the UK on 23rd July 2025.

Congratulations, you've reached the end of your 30 day challenge. Hopefully you've discovered lots, now it's time to decide what to do with your new knowledge and healthy habits...

Deciding to increase the amount of protein you include in your diet, learning about the best sources of protein, and starting to build your healthy new habits over the course of the first 30 days are the hard bits. You've achieved that. But now you need to decide how you want to continue your progress.

Our calendar on page 80 will help you to plan out your next 30 days, but what else do you need to do? Have you decided which habits you want to stick with? Are you happy that continuing with your new habits is enough for you, or is there something different you want to try? Have you recorded the protein levels of some of your favourite recipes so you don't have to keep working it out every time? (Have you made use of our protein tracking journal on page 84?)

Reflecting back over the last month is useful in deciding what you should do next, so here are some prompts to get you thinking...

How do you feel?

Take a moment to check in with yourself. Grab a pen and jot down your thoughts:

Do you generally have more energy?

Do you have less muscle pain/do your muscles recover quicker after exercise?

Do you find yourself getting less hungry between meals?

Has your sleep improved?

Foods I want to keep eating regularly: *(list as many as you like)*

Meals I enjoy and will repeat:

My go-to high protein products:

Healthy habits I will stick with:

The biggest lesson I learned:

You've got this!

Your journey doesn't end here – it's just the beginning! Keep listening to your body, making mindful choices and enjoying the benefits of a high-protein lifestyle.

30 DAYS TO

STAY UP TO DATE!

30 DAYS TO
Increase Your Protein
NEW!
Your day-by-day guide to future-proofing your body
WHY YOU NEED MORE PROTEIN
+30 easy ways to get it
Including 30 recipes with 20g+ protein for every meal
Protein-packed breakfast ideas
Lunches to boost your metabolism
Budget-friendly meal planning
Dinners that help to rebuild muscle

Make sure you're the first to hear about each new issue of ***30 Days*** as they're published.

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